

“Almost Too Terrible to Believe”: The Camilla, Georgia, Race Riot
and Massacre, September 1868

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Joshua William Butler

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Major Professor




Dr. Thomas Aiello
Assistant Professor of History

**Committee
Member**



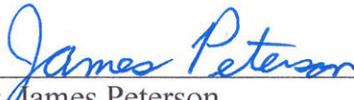
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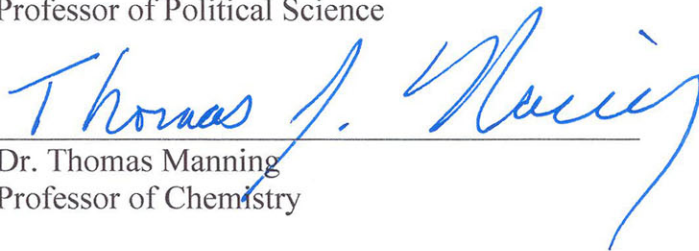
Dr. Lee Formwalt
Professor of History



Dr. Melanie Byrd
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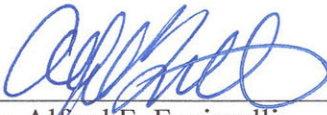


Dr. James Peterson
Professor of Political Science



Dr. Thomas Manning
Professor of Chemistry

**Dean of the
Graduate School**



Dr. Alfred F. Fuciarelli
Professor of Chemistry

ABSTRACT

Camilla, Georgia, became the site of a racially motivated political riot on Saturday, September 19, 1868. Determined to promote political and social reform with an organized rally, at least 150 freedmen, along with Republican political candidates, advanced toward the town's courthouse square. Local citizens warned the black and white activists of the impending violence and demanded that they forfeit their guns, even though carrying weapons was customary at the time. The marchers refused to give up their guns and continued to the courthouse square, where local whites fired upon them. This assault forced the Republicans and freedmen to retreat as locals gave chase, killing an estimated fifteen protestors and wounding forty others.

The Camilla Massacre was the culmination of smaller acts of violence committed by white inhabitants that had plagued southwest Georgia since the end of the Civil War. Local whites had individually attacked freedmen and white Republicans for three years without repercussion. That lack of punishment assured the perpetrators that violence was a legitimate way to oppose black activism. At the same time, Camilla was part of a broader attempt across the South to keep former slaves and their Republican leaders in line. Contextualizing the event within the framework of other acts of political mob violence during Reconstruction demonstrates that knowledge of no forthcoming punishment, the oppression of blacks' voting rights and an inherent racist tradition motivated southern whites to retaliate against freedmen, scalawags and carpetbaggers. At times, whites needed no political motive to attack, but this thesis explores instances when southern whites perpetrated violence on blacks and attempted to justify it using politics since a large quantity of violence occurred at campaign speeches or near elections.

Whites who provoked violence used aggression to challenge gains made by blacks with the direct goal of returning the South to a racially oppressive utopia or simply ridding the region of Republicans. Although cut from the same cloth, these people had no recorded affiliation with the Ku Klux Klan, but they orchestrated a systematic pattern of reactionary violence that peaked during certain occasions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Introduction.....	1
II.	“The Colliding Forces: Southwest Georgia Through 1867”	17
III.	“No Action By Civil Authorities”	44
IV.	“‘Damn My Soul To Hell:’ James Johns and the Camilla Massacre”	61
V.	“‘Almost Too Terrible to Believe:’ The Fallout from the Camilla Massacre”	77
VI.	“Reconstruction Political Riots”	96
VII.	Conclusion.....	128
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	132
	APPENDIX A: Acts of Reconstruction Political Race Violence Leading to Camilla.....	143
	APPENDIX B: Civil Unrest in Camilla, Georgia, 1868 Players and Places.....	165
	APPENDIX C: Riots	170

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the one person who has sacrificed the most in my research and writing, my wife. Meaghan has been able to forgo vacations, a vast number of dinner dates, and most importantly a clean house. Our coffee table has consisted of history books and cluttered paperwork, and she was usually able to overlook such occurrences. Without my wife's support and patience, I would have never been able to complete any task of this magnitude. I am really looking forward to just being a husband. Thank you for all of your help and assistance.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Camilla, Georgia, became the site of a racially motivated political riot on Saturday, September 19, 1868. Determined to promote political and social reform with an organized rally, at least 150 freedmen, along with Republican political candidates, advanced toward the town's courthouse square. Local citizens warned the black and white activists of the impending violence and demanded that they forfeit their guns, even though carrying weapons was customary at the time. The marchers refused to give up their guns and continued to the courthouse square, where local whites fired upon them. This assault forced the Republicans and freedmen to retreat as locals gave chase, killing an estimated fifteen protestors and wounding forty others.¹

The Camilla Massacre was the culmination of smaller acts of violence committed by white inhabitants that had plagued southwest Georgia since the end of the Civil War. Local whites had individually attacked freedmen and white Republicans for three years without repercussion. That lack of punishment assured the perpetrators that violence was a legitimate way to oppose black activism. At the same time, Camilla was part of a broader attempt across the South to keep former slaves and their Republican leaders in line. Contextualizing the event within the framework of other acts of political mob violence during Reconstruction demonstrates that knowledge of no forthcoming punishment, the oppression of blacks' voting rights and an inherent racist tradition

¹ Estimates based on Affidavit of John Murphy, 22 September 1868. Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Record Group 1-1-5, Box 56. Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, GA.

motivated southern whites to retaliate against freedmen, scalawags and carpetbaggers. At times, whites needed no political motive to attack, but this thesis explores instances when southern whites perpetrated violence on blacks and attempted to justify it using politics since a large quantity of violence occurred at campaign speeches or near elections. Whites who provoked violence used aggression to challenge gains made by blacks with the direct goal of returning the South to a racially oppressive utopia or simply ridding the region of Republicans. Although cut from the same cloth, these people had no recorded affiliation with the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), but they orchestrated a systematic pattern of reactionary violence that peaked during certain occasions.

Historical accounts of Reconstruction violence and political riots can be divided into three distinct schools of interpretation. Much of the first century after the Civil War saw the creation of primarily “Lost Cause” or “Tragic Era” literature that portrayed blacks as the primary causes of Reconstruction violence. Historians of the Dunning school regarded most problems that arose during Reconstruction as the fault of either Republicans, northern and southern, or their African American counterparts in the South. The Dunning School—many of them graduate students of Columbia University historian William Dunning—hailed white Democrats as the heroes of the era because of their opposition to scalawags and carpetbaggers. This type of analysis dominated Reconstruction studies for over fifty years. In fact, it gained popularity in the early 1900s because its views on race appealed to the southern and northern white population.²

² Beginning in the 1890s, Lost Cause organizations such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy began constructing memorials and monuments throughout the South in order to establish a continuation of Confederate heritage. In addition, they fueled the beliefs that slavery had not caused the war and that slaves were happy and content in their labor. In addition, by the turn of the century southerners strongly demonstrated their supremacy over blacks. Jim Crow laws prohibited blacks from riding in the same rail cars as whites or attending the same schools. Furthermore, whites had resorted to mob violence to hunt down blacks suspected of crimes against whites as lynching became commonplace

Dunning introduced the trend at a time when an unprecedented number of students pursued graduate-level degrees, which in turn contributed to the growth of the modern historical profession and gave Dunning inordinate influence.³

The 1907 publication of Dunning's *Reconstruction, Political and Economic* set the tone for the "Dunning School." Dunning argued that the forced equality of blacks and whites in the South (through the legislation of white northerners) triggered the violence committed against the black population. Reconstruction, in this view, began as a flawed proposition but only changed for the worse once Congress got involved in 1866.⁴

Other like-minded ideologues blamed lack of governmental experience on the part of Republicans as prompting racial violence during the Reconstruction era. Federal laws challenged racial traditions. Local black politicians were corrupt and so Democrats chose to retaliate.⁵ Historians who supported Dunning's stance associated Republicans with violence, which, by extension, meant that they associated blacks with violence. For example, University of Georgia professor E. Merton Coulter wrote that the Camilla Riot

throughout the South. All the while, white southerners celebrated their role in the war, and their triumph over blacks following the formation of Confederate Memorial Day. Dunning pushed his "Lost Cause" sentiments into history books; United Daughters of the Confederacy shared it with their fellow citizens in the South, but the 1915 film, "Birth of a Nation," carried the message to the entire country. This film reached an audience in a way that no book ever could. In fact, President Woodrow Wilson, the first southerner elected President since before the war, screened the movie in the White House, and remarked, "It's like writing history with lightning. And my only regret is that it is all terribly true." For a more in depth look at developments around the turn of the century that allowed for Professor Dunning's prominence, see David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 272-299. For an analysis of "Birth of a Nation," see Conrad Pitcher, "D.W. Griffith's Controversial Film, 'The Birth of a Nation,'" *OAH Magazine of History* 13 (Spring 1999), 50-55. Woodrow Wilson's quote on the movie is in Pitcher's article on page 50.

³ Dunning's followers argued that blacks were puppets of Radical Republicans, since they lacked the ability to think for themselves. This approach reached a great number of people through Dunning's prolific writings, but mainly through his students at Columbia University and their writings.

⁴ William A. Dunning, *Reconstruction Political and Economic 1865-1877* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1907), xv.

⁵ Claude G Bowers, *The Tragic Era: The Revolution after Lincoln* (Cambridge: The Literary Guild of America, 1929), 232.

was “led on by the vermin, black and white, native and imported.”⁶ Coulter’s outlook reflected long-established convictions among white Southerners, as was also apparent in Theodore Fitz Simons’s article, “The Camilla Riot.” Though Fitz Simons admitted that the Georgia legislature purged itself of all black members in early September 1868, he then based his entire analysis of the events at Camilla on *The Journal of the Senate of Georgia, 1868*.⁷ The purged, lily-white Senate of Georgia contributed to the massacre, since black politicians needed to campaign for the “seats to which they have been legally elected.”⁸ They experienced violence on several occasions. Fitz Simons, however, never acknowledged the racial issues with citing the state legislature. Neither did Coulter.

⁶ E. Merton Coulter, *The South during Reconstruction 1865-1877* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1947), 157. Native whites here referred to scalawags and imported whites to carpetbaggers. Carpetbaggers were northerners who moved south and ran on the Republican ticket. Scalawags were southerners who switched to the Republican Party following the war. All white Republican politicians associated with the Camilla Massacre were carpetbaggers; Hines and Joiner were freedmen and joined the party upon receiving voting rights. In southwest Georgia, scalawags were rare. Most southerners associated Republicans with radicalism, which with the path of Reconstruction had grown to upset most white Georgians. Democrats were able to alienate any individual, who ran on the Republican ticket in southwest Georgia, from the white voters by painting them as radicals and traitors. Essentially, the label of radical meant that one accepted the emancipation of slaves, desired for blacks and whites to ride side by side in train cars, and ultimately supporting interracial relations between black men and white women. While these arguments were untrue in most cases, allegations were enough to curb white support for the Republicans. Though most southerners voting and running under the Republican ticket did not fully support Charles Sumner and other radicals, they were all lumped into the same group. In southwest Georgia, some overlooked or downplayed the price of joining the Republican Party. The freedmen electorate was powerful in the region, they elected blacks and whites to local offices, and even succeeded in sending Richard Henry Whiteley to Congress several times. But, leaving the Democratic Party damaged the reputation of anyone making the move, it also cost them social standing and at times economic hardships resulted. They exposed themselves to the constant threat of violence or death that constantly loomed over those running against Democrats. In Georgia as a whole, the Republican Party was weak, which also prevented people from becoming scalawags, and the numbers only dwindled as the Reconstruction process continued. For a more in-depth look at scalawags in southwest Georgia, see William Warren Rogers Jr., *A Scalawag in Georgia: Richard Whiteley and the Politics of Reconstruction* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

⁷ Theodore Fitz Simons, Jr., “The Camilla Riot,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 35 (June 1951): 116-125.

⁸ *Atlanta Daily New Era*, 10 September 1868, in Christopher Meyers, *The Empire State of the South: Georgia History in Documents and Essays* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2008), 181.

William Dunning's students and followers produced most but not all of the published writings on Reconstruction during the first half of the twentieth century. W. E. B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction*, published in 1935, was the most notable exception. Du Bois sought to dispel myths about African Americans in books by white scholars. *Black Reconstruction* failed to provide groundbreaking theories, but the masterfully written manuscript portrayed blacks as agents in the drama and victims of misdeeds rather than their instigators. Du Bois illustrated how previous Reconstruction historians ignored valid sources in order to paint the former slaves as incompetent and unworthy of their status as freedpersons. His work strived to change that historical perception.⁹ Unfortunately, white academics mostly ignored Du Bois's effort, and large-scale acceptance of sympathetic black history surfaced only after the mid-twentieth century.

The next phase of Reconstruction scholarship, known as revisionism, extended roughly from the 1960s through the late 1980s, and added to the emerging field of African-American history.¹⁰ Revisionists generally regarded Republicans as the heroes of Reconstruction and blacks as victims of Democratic retaliation. These historians provided a much-needed shift in Reconstruction thinking, because they used sources ignored by their predecessors. During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and

⁹ W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1935).

¹⁰ Historians in the 1960s, a decade known as the "Second Reconstruction," produced works that challenged the Dunning School. Beginning in the 1950s, southern white oppression became mainstream news during the Cold War. The *Brown v. Board*, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, sit-ins at Woolworth's, and the murder of Emmet Till set the stage for the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Historians, such as the leading southern historian C. Vann Woodward, embraced the movement towards integration and students of Reconstruction followed suit. Blacks banded together to create movements to challenge segregation and historians writing in the 1960s used this model to reexamine Reconstruction. See Eric Foner, "Reconstruction Revisited," *Reviews in American History* 10 (Dec. 1982), 82-100; Timothy B. Tyson, "Dynamite and 'The Silent South': A Story from the Second Reconstruction in South Carolina," in Jane Dailey, Glenda Gilmore, and Bryant Simon, *Jumpin' Jim Crow: Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 275-291; and C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow: A Commemorative Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 190-220.

1960s, revisionist writers wrote a substantial number of books. In 1961, John Hope Franklin began the decade of change with *Reconstruction after the Civil War*, and then Kenneth Stampp published *The Era of Reconstruction* in 1965. Much like W. E. B. Du Bois, Stampp and Franklin sought to overturn inaccuracies in Reconstruction scholarship by challenging mainstream thought concerning the role of blacks in American history.¹¹ They redefined the political history of Reconstruction, challenging popular views of black codes, Abraham Lincoln, and Andrew Johnson. But these revisionists also questioned the concept that racism was uniquely southern and its location not only in the South but also the North. Together they “provide[d] a more accurate account of what actually took place in the decade following the Civil War.”¹²

In his 1973 Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Been in the Storm So Long*, Leon Litwack argued that although whites oppressed blacks, the freedmen still struggled to gain a sense of identity. They were not always successful. Freedmen seemed to wander aimlessly with no sense of belonging. Blacks appeared confused about their place in society and, according to Litwack, welcomed northern assistance. *Been in the Storm So Long* described the transition from slavery to freedom without focusing solely on the “degrees of mental and physical violence” experienced by freedmen following the collapse of slavery.¹³

In 1984, Michael Perman argued that Ulysses S. Grant’s election in 1868 caused an upsurge of violence within the South. Perman’s work established the trend of tying

¹¹ Kenneth Stampp, *The Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965).

¹² John Hope Franklin, “Review of Kenneth Stampp, *The Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965),” *The Journal of Negro History* 50 (October 1965) 288.

¹³ Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm so Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), xi.

racial violence to national political action. Republicans attempted to form coalitions within the region during Grant's two campaigns, but this gesture failed to keep Democrats from regaining political power in the South.¹⁴

The most recent trend in Reconstruction historiography, neo-revisionism, began in the late 1980s, culminating in the emergence of more original research and a new sensitivity to race issues.¹⁵ Historians moved beyond debating which side was heroic (or even correct) in its actions and instead reported the facts in more objective ways. Eric Foner's publications in the 1980s, for example, *Nothing But Freedom, Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* and the condensed *A Short History of Reconstruction*, altered the perception of Reconstruction studies. Foner changed the historical interpretation of Reconstruction by moving beyond politics and beginning his study in 1863 in order to provide more emphasis on the impact that Lincoln's emancipation had on the years following the Civil War. *Reconstruction* became the foundational comprehensive study of the era on which most following scholarship would be based.

Richard Zuczek continued the neo-revisionist trend in his *State of Rebellion*, arguing that whites within the state of South Carolina used violence to control the efforts of Republican activists. This aggression emanated from the desire to fight for the ideals

¹⁴ Allan C. Ashcraft, "Book Review of Michael Perman, *The Road to Redemption: Southern Politics, 1869-1879* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984)," *The Journal of The Louisiana Historical Association* 26 (Autumn 1985): 214-216.

¹⁵ During the 1980s, African American history elevated itself to the status of a scholarly field. Studies became culturally specialized in this new area, they examined the role of freedmen during Reconstruction and emancipation. Foner's work became the standard synthesis but later works have used his approach to more narrowly approachable topics at the state or local level, but also research into individuals. This gave birth to the history from below view. These historians studied how commoners influenced or experienced their environment and events around them. The combination of African American history (with memory of the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power Movement still weighing on historians) as well as the rise of social history helps to explain the emergence of neo-revisionists writings beginning in the 1980s. See Joe W. Trotter, "African-American History: Origins, Development, and Current State of the Field, *OAH Magazine of History* 7 (Summer 1993), 12-18.

that instigated the war to begin with, and Zuczek argued that Reconstruction was nothing more than a continuation of the Civil War (at least to southerners). *State of Rebellion* focuses more on assaults committed at the hands of the KKK, but it pinpoints the underlying motivating factors for such hostility as an attempt at political superiority.¹⁶ The violent subjugation of freedmen and Republicans accounted for the Democratic politicians' successes during Reconstruction.¹⁷

Christopher Waldrep addressed a different reason for the violence in his study of Warren County, Mississippi. Emancipation bred the anger that sparked violence used on blacks. Freedmen began Reconstruction as new players in the legal and political systems, and whites manipulated the system in every possible manner to ensure their control of blacks. White Democrats argued that state laws were incapable of keeping blacks in order, forcing common citizens to undertake the task at their own risk through extra-legal violence.¹⁸

Nicholas Lemann's 2006 Reconstruction work, *Redemption*, focuses on race relations in Louisiana and Mississippi between 1873 and 1875 in areas where blacks comprised the majority. Lemann believed that W. E. B. Du Bois's work on Reconstruction was thorough but ended too early. *Redemption* extended his examination of the lives of blacks during their fight for political equality. Lemann argued that assaults committed by white southerners, "began to evolve into an organized, if unofficial,

¹⁶ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "Review of *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996)," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 98 (April 1997), 212.

¹⁷ Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

¹⁸ Christopher Waldrep, *Roots of Disorder: Race and Criminal Justice in the American South, 1817-1880* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

military effort to take away by terrorist violence the black political rights that were now part of the Constitution.” As a result, violence became the norm in Mississippi and Louisiana.¹⁹ Lemann’s work contributed immensely to Reconstruction historiography, but as the author focused on only two states within a period of just over two years, Lemann failed to note the interconnectedness of all race-related political violence during the postwar period.²⁰

Paralleling the historiography of Reconstruction-era violence, the historical treatment of the violence at Camilla also demonstrated its own evolution. The history of the Camilla Massacre first appeared in print in 1915 with Mildred Thompson’s *Reconstruction in Georgia*. In her preface, Thompson acknowledged her professor William Dunning at Columbia University for his guidance and encouragement.²¹ Unsurprisingly, her coverage of the Camilla Massacre pointed the finger of blame solely at Republicans and blacks. She even suggested that there were no feelings of animosity between the two races following the shootings in the city.²²

Theodore Fitz Simons, Jr.’s 1951 article, “The Camilla Riot,” agreed with Thompson’s view, arguing that the “Camilla Riot in itself is nothing more than a local skirmish between two politically defined groups adhering to ideas in direct opposition one to the other.” It played out, according to Fitz Simons, as an equally divided standoff

¹⁹ Milton Moskowitz, “How Whites Used Violence to Take Back Control the South,” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 54 (Winter 2006/2007): 102-106.

²⁰ Nicholas Lemann, *Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2006), xi.

²¹ C. Mildred Thompson, *Reconstruction in Georgia: Economic, Social, Political 1865-1872* (New York: The Columbia University Press, 1915), 4. Thompson demonstrated Dunning’s inherent racism in her work on Camilla.

²² *Ibid.*, 384-385.

between the white Democrats versus black and white Republicans.²³ The Camilla Massacre, according to this article, was important as only one of many occurrences within the state of Georgia in 1868, existing without any connection to other southern states during Reconstruction.²⁴

Fitz Simons only briefly mentioned affidavits recorded by the Freedman's Bureau immediately following the incident, claiming that the Bureau records were filled with grave exaggerations and inaccurate reports.²⁵ He decided that a more viable source was the report produced by the all-white Georgia Legislature.²⁶

Olive Hall Shadgett's *The Republican Party in Georgia*, the first published revisionist work on Reconstruction Georgia, examined the struggles of the Republican Party and suggested that any political competition was doomed to fail before it ever began. Regional anguish over the Civil War made the party the clear target for violence and oppression.²⁷ Despite describing the failure of the Republican Party, Shadgett omitted the Camilla Massacre, a significant event that contributed to the downfall of the party during Reconstruction, arguing instead that intimidation efforts by the KKK played a key role in keeping blacks from the ballot box. Meanwhile, Republican politicians, both scalawags and carpetbaggers, feared campaigning because of violence experienced

²³Theodore Fitz Simons Jr., "The Camilla Riot," 116.

²⁴ Ibid., 125.

²⁵ This manner allowed Fitz Simons to discuss the existence of the documents, but to dismiss them as illegitimate or invalid sources when producing a reformulation of the Camilla Massacre. Rather than complete original research of the documents, he relied on the interpretation of Robert Henry. Robert Selph Henry, *The Story of Reconstruction* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1938), 324.

²⁶Theodore Fitz Simons Jr., "The Camilla Riot," 123.

²⁷ Olive Hall Shadgett, *The Republican Party in Georgia from Reconstruction Through 1900* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1964), vii.

on the campaign trail. In addition, she noted that laws accompanied KKK terrorism in successfully dwindling black participation in government.²⁸

Spencer Bidwell King, Jr. addressed the Camilla Massacre but drew on the work of Mildred Thompson when constructing his *Georgia Voices*. According to King, political campaigning caused the Camilla riot rather than racial contention following the Civil War. *Georgia Voices* outlined the Democrats' attempt to systematically use race to ensure the continued support of whites at election times. This work also used one-sided, incomplete sources that represented the "Lost Cause" view of Reconstruction. King's intentions were less than objective. He claimed that, "Under General Meade's protection the carpetbag government was able to get the Fourteenth Amendment ratified."²⁹ In contrast, Margaret Spence and Anna M. Fleming, in their 1976 history of Mitchell County, shifted blame to African Americans for being instigators of the Camilla Massacre. Spence and Fleming did not indicate their sources but almost certainly drew from Fitz Simons's article.³⁰

In 1982, the early neo-revisionist, Edmund Drago published his *Black Politicians and Reconstruction in Georgia*. Drago attempted to demonstrate the successes of blacks following emancipation and the end of the Civil War, but his work seemed to focus more on blacks' weaknesses, such as political inexperience and corrupt intentions, rather than

²⁸Ibid., 14-15.

²⁹ Spencer Bidwell King, Jr., *Georgia Voices: A Documentary History to 1872* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1966), 328-329.

³⁰ Margaret Spence and Anna M. Fleming, *History of Mitchell County, 1857-1976*, (Camilla: Historic Mitchell County, Inc., 1976), 171-172.

the instances of violence committed upon them.³¹ For example, the author covered Camilla's riot by stating that Republicans marched into town. At the time of their arrival, a white drunk man fired upon them. Still, Drago blamed the "murder by wholesale" on political tension within the state. Politics and race remained interconnected throughout Reconstruction, but Drago ignored the way in which whites' hunted freedmen down after they fled from the courthouse in Camilla.³²

In 1984, George C. Rable published *But There was No Peace*, which explored the white Southerners' belief that Republicans and blacks were responsible for acts of violence committed upon them. Rable researched and wrote about many acts of violence that took place in the South in order to better understand the role that violence played in ending Reconstruction.³³ *But There was No Peace* was the author's attempt at covering facets of violence throughout the South in order to establish its presence in everyday life. Rable offered a newer interpretation of the Camilla riot, portraying the incident as a standoff between two armies rather than an attack on slightly armed freedmen.³⁴ Moreover, Fitz Simons' article served as the author's sole source, and this explained Rable's interpretation of the massacre. Rable focused on a broader topic, and his lack of original research on Mitchell County's riot left him relying on outdated sources.

³¹Edmund Drago, *Black Politicians and Reconstruction in Georgia: A Splendid Failure* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), xi.

³²Ibid., 51. Drago then claimed that following the Camilla incident "black politicians began to challenge the hegemony of Georgia whites, especially that of their Republican allies."

³³ George C. Rable, *But There was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: The University Press of Georgia, 1984), xv.

³⁴Ibid., 73-74.

In 1987, Lee Formwalt wrote on the Camilla incident, demonstrating Camilla's importance in both the state and local context. He created the most accurate account of the riot to date, and labeled Camilla's event as the most "notorious" act of political violence during Reconstruction.³⁵ Formwalt's neo-revisionist study examined the previously ignored Freedmen's Bureau records, which allowed him to reconstruct the Camilla riot from the testimony of the victims. His study, however, did not place Camilla in a broader region-wide context. Nonetheless, "The Camilla Massacre of 1868" marked a turning point in the historiography of Camilla because of the author's original research.

Formwalt held the position of acting editor for the *Journal of Southwest Georgia History* at the time of his article's publication in the *Georgia Historical Quarterly*. A few weeks following the release of the article, the editor received a related manuscript from Lewis Nicholas Wynne and Milly St. Julien Vappie, both from the University of South Florida. "The Camilla Race Riot and The Failure of Reconstruction in Georgia" presented primarily background information leading up to the incident and offered only three pages on the actual event. Wynne and Vappie cited Formwalt as the most detailed account of the Camilla Massacre, but they failed to offer any new information.³⁶ However, the authors did acknowledge a link between the Camilla Massacre and some other events that took place in the Reconstruction South, although their explanation of such connections was lacking. In 2008, by way of a documentary history of the state of Georgia, Christopher C. Meyers noted that the Camilla Massacre was the worst act of

³⁵ Lee Formwalt, "The Camilla Massacre of 1868: Racial Violence as Political Propaganda," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 71 (Fall 1987): 399.

³⁶ Lewis Nicholas Wynne and Milley St. Julien Vappie, "The Camilla Riot and the Failure of Reconstruction in Georgia," *Journal of Southwest Georgia History* 5 (Fall 1987): 35-37.

racial aggression within the state during Reconstruction. In fact, the work placed the incident along with the purging of the black politicians from the state legislature as the two reasons that led to the expulsion of the state of Georgia from the Union, thus returning the state to military rule and prolonging Reconstruction.³⁷

This thesis attempts to not only reconstruct the events of September 19, 1868, but, more importantly, to uncover the local, state, regional and national foundations for the riot. This work examines the importance of Camilla in two separate but equal aspects. First, it exposes local actions prior to September that fostered the social acceptance by whites of violence and suppression of blacks. Second, and in a broader context, the text illustrates that the massacre was part of a regional trend to eradicate the voting rights of freedmen. Large-scale politically motivated mob violence such as the Camilla riot exemplified the white southerners' oppression of freedmen and virtually nonexistent punishment. Emphasizing the fact that Camilla's riot was not an isolated incident, the text demonstrates how the riot functioned as both a consequence and representation of broken racial relations in the postwar state and nation.

Chapter 2 examines state, regional and national politics that bred regional divisions over slavery on the eve of war. It also provides an overview of race relations in the region throughout the Civil War. The chapter concludes with a discussion of state constitutional conventions held in Georgia from the end of the war until 1868. Chapter 3 depicts race relations in southwest Georgia in terms of violence throughout the year 1868 leading up to the Camilla Massacre. At this time, violent attacks upon freedmen were commonplace occurrences. The Camilla riot represented just one of the South's hostile episodes. This chapter demonstrates that the lack of action by civil authorities led to

³⁷ Meyers, *The Empire State of the South*, 172.

common knowledge that no punishment awaited a white person for attacking, threatening, or killing a black person.

The next two chapters reconstruct the riot on September 19, 1868, citing inconsistencies among affidavits filed by freedmen. Freedmen and others provided insights into what happened during the Camilla Massacre, and Chapter 5 supplies a comparative analysis of varying reports. Accounts of the Camilla Massacre reached Americans across the United States via local newspapers. As such, the final section of Chapter 5 analyzes the first accounts of the riot, shedding light on the growing disconnect among versions of the massacre that have appeared since 1868. Regional divides in coverage never materialized because newspaper articles depended on wire reports from Georgia. There were no reporters who traveled to Camilla, the columnist within the state were responsible for sending reports to newspapers across the country. Few papers, however, recognized the existence of multiple versions of the same event.

Chapter 6 demonstrates the interconnectedness between the riot at Camilla and other similar events during Reconstruction. Beginning with Norfolk, Virginia, in 1866 and continuing through Cainhoy, South Carolina, in 1876, the chapter highlights the prevalence of racially motivated political riots during elections. While each massacre featured unique attributes, the events revealed similarities in the attempts of Republican politicians to gain a foothold in elections and the racist response to those attempts. These riots exemplified racial violence during Reconstruction. There was much political violence throughout the former Confederate States of America that was not associated with the KKK, nor were they examples of mob violence associated with the rumors of black men raping white women. These massacres or riots were unique in these ways, but

more importantly they stopped after Reconstruction ended because they were no longer needed. Simply put, Reconstruction ends with the end of the Republican Party in the South.

Throughout this process, the thesis uncovers the causes of the Camilla Massacre. Mitchell County's riot existed alongside a number of individual attacks on black and white Republicans that occurred throughout Reconstruction. Whites assaulted blacks without regard to punishment, because the past three years demonstrated that courts would not convict a white of attacking or murdering freedmen nor would local authorities do much to investigate. This trend provided the understanding that extra-legal assaults fit as an acceptable way to oppress local blacks who desired political equality. Concurrently this event took its place in a chain of events that embodied the southern backlash to keep freedmen and Republicans in check. Analyzing the Camilla Massacre in relation to other political riots demonstrated that racism, oppression, and a total disregard for lawful punishment aided white southerners in choosing violent measures as a means to maintaining white supremacy, thus preserving their southern way of life.

Chapter II

“THE COLLIDING FORCES: SOUTHWEST GEORGIA THROUGH 1867”

Camilla and Mitchell County, Georgia, were originally Creek country surrendered to the United States in the 1814 Treaty at Fort Jackson.¹ Georgia divided the land ceded by Native Americans into land lots to be given away in land lotteries.² The lottery of 1820 awarded lands covering much of the southwest section of the state (applying only to land south of the future Lee County line and extended west to Chattahoochee and east to settled counties in east Georgia), including the area later known as Mitchell County.³ Despite having access to free land, few people moved to the region. Citizens hesitated to improve land, according to an early twentieth-century history the region, “which God Almighty had left in an unfinished condition.”⁴ It took approximately forty years (1820-

¹ Christopher Meyers, *The Empire State of the South: Georgia History in Documents and Essays* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2008), 72-76.

² *Ibid.*, 73. Every head of household received a ticket; widows and orphans received two. As Georgia removed Indians from areas of the state, lotteries occurred. State agents surveyed the land and divided it up into land plots. One barrel consisted of all the names of eligible individuals, and all the land plots placed into a second barrel. Two people held responsibility for the drawing, one drew from each barrel. The name pulled from one barrel won the land retrieved from the second barrel. This gave away the free land to the winners, although a small processing fee existed in some cases. County officials orchestrated the head right system as a scheme that allowed them to sell land to speculation companies. In many instances, these sales consisted of fraudulent details and practices. The state legislature saw the county folk making money and followed suit, giving birth to the Yazoo land sales. They sold land, in present day Alabama and Mississippi, to speculation companies for a profit. However, this land belonged to the Indians. In both cases, the sale symbolized fraud and corruption, and in the attempt to correct this error, the land lotteries spawned. Officials established land lotteries in order to curb fraud within the head right system and the Yazoo land sales.

³ *Ibid.*, v.

⁴ W. Irwin MacIntyre, *History of Thomas County: From the Time of De Soto to the Civil War Vol. I* (Thomasville: W. Irwin MacIntyre, 1923), 1.

1857) for the area to obtain its necessary legal population to become a separate county, after which Camilla became the county's seat.

In the heart of southwest Georgia, Mitchell County, like a majority of the state, relied heavily on agriculture and slavery. The invention of the cotton gin in the 1790s established a rejuvenation of slavery, an institution previously thought to be dying out. After Eli Whitney, cotton was king. Cotton "engines" created an economic imperative for slavery that was absent beforehand. With the Industrial Revolution came the rise of textile factories in England and in the northern United States during the mid-1800s. These two markets ensured a continuously high demand for two types of cotton, long staple and short staple.⁵ The cotton gin processed more short staple cotton fibers by separating the seeds from the fiber at a higher efficiency rate than human workers. Large cotton plantations multiplied along the "black belt" and spread into the southern region of the state. The cotton gin's boost in production increased the demand for slaves, who now spent more time cultivating and picking cotton rather than removing seeds from fibers. Following this development, farmers set aside massive surfaces of land for production of the non-edible crop.

Despite developments that affected southern agriculture, the transformation of slavery was not necessarily a quick process. For example, in response to a northern newspaper editor who accused southern newspapers of being pro-slavery in 1820, an editor of the Milledgeville's *Georgia Journal* replied, "This is a gross mistake. There is

⁵ More types of cotton existed, but within Georgia during the antebellum era, farmers utilized these two types. Key difference is the seeds were easily removed from the silky fibers of Sea Island or long staple cotton but were difficult to remove from short staple or upland cotton. Most southern land was suitable to short staple cotton—that is why the gin created a cotton revolution.

not a single editor in these states, who dares advocate Slavery as a principle.”⁶ However, as the 1860 election neared, production of cotton continued to rise. Georgia farms increased by 10,244 between 1850 and 1860, an increase of approximately 3.8 million acres. The value of farmland increased from \$95,753,445 in 1850 to \$157,072,803 in 1860.⁷ Slaves made up forty-three percent of Georgia’s population in 1860.⁸ Out of a black population of nearly 466,000, only 3,500 blacks were free before the Civil War.⁹

Slaveholding in southwest Georgia took an economically predictable turn between 1850 and 1860. Non-slaveholders decreased from 40.2 percent to 32 percent of the white population. Slaveholders owning less than five slaves fell from 23.5 percent to 17.5 percent. However, every other classification of slave owners increased. Farms with 6 to 10 slaves rose from 8.2 percent to 10.8 percent. Farmers owning between 11 and 20 black workers went from 10.5 percent to 13 percent. Planters owning between 21 and 50 slaves increased from 12.7 percent to 16.9 percent. Larger slaveholders owning between 51 and 100 slaves rose from 3.6 percent all the way to 8 percent. The total percentage of slave-owner land holdings increased from 59.8 percent up to 68 percent.¹⁰ Historian Susan E. O’Donovan noted this numerical trend in migration: “Southwest Georgia’s slave population expanded at a breathtaking rate. From a low of 219 in 1820, their numbers

⁶ *Georgia Journal*, 9 January 1821, 3.

⁷ Meyers, *Empire State of the South*, 99.

⁸Statistic derived from 8th Census of the United States---1860---Georgia. “Historical Census Browser.” *University of Virginia Library*. Accessed 15 October 2010.
<http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/start.php?year=V1860>.

⁹ Spencer B. King, *Georgia Voices: A Documentary History to 1872* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1966), 176.

¹⁰ Susan E. O’Donovan, “Transforming Work: Slavery, Free Labor, and the Household in Southwest Georgia, 1850-1880” (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of California, San Diego, 1997), 21.

shot up an astonishing 290-fold over the next forty years...Their numbers propelled by the continued arrival of free settlers—many of whom transported slaves along with their stocks of plows, seed, cattle, and hogs.”¹¹ Many planters also relocated themselves and their slaves to the southwest corner of the state during the war.¹² The move during the Civil War was for different reasons than before 1860—they moved to keep their slaves sheltered from contact with Union soldiers.

Mitchell County appeared on a census for the first time in 1860 (although mobilization and population can be tracked by looking at the land districts that comprised the new county, which were in Baker County in the 1850 census), listing a population of 4,308—1,589 slaves and 2,716 whites (only three free persons of color).¹³ Slaves accounted for nearly 37 percent of the total population. One hundred and forty-three slaveholders (three percent of the population) owned the county’s 1,589 slaves.¹⁴ Farms in Mitchell County averaged just over 11 slaves per farm and just over 12 slaves per slave household.¹⁵ Camilla’s Bartley M. Cox, the largest slaveholder, owned 74. Three other planters held over 50 slaves; Troup Butler of Camilla and Gum Pond’s Egbert Shanklin

¹¹ Susan E. O’Donovan, *Becoming Free in the Cotton South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 18.

¹² Clarence Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom: Masters and Slaves in Civil War Georgia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 100.

¹³ The county had 839 female slaves, compared to 750 males held in slavery.

¹⁴ U. S. Census Office, Population Schedules, Ga., 8th Census of the United States--1860, Miller-Muscogee, *The National Archives of the United States, A Microfilm Publication*, 1934, Roll 131; U. S. Census Office, Population Schedules, Ga., 8th Census of the United States--1860, Miller-Muscogee, *The National Archives of the United States, A Microfilm Publication*, 1934, Roll 149 (Schedule 2).

¹⁵ This statistic is more than likely skewed since Joseph J. Bradford left Gordon Ivey’s 31 slaves not living in any houses. (Ivey is listed as “Agent for Dr. Tinsley.”) However, Mitchell County’s Schedule 2 of the 1860 Census displayed such results. Without Tinsley and Ivey’s slaves there would be 4.5 slaves per slave household.

owned 53. Robert J. Bacon possessed 54 slaves. Four individuals held 15 percent of the total slaves in the county. The other 139 slave owners in the community split the remaining 85 percent. The majority of slaveholders within Mitchell County were small farmers, 87 owned less than ten slaves.¹⁶

Georgia continuously struggled with negative race relations. As Clarence Mohr stated, “Slavery in all of its settings was a relationship which simultaneously forced human beings together and drove them apart.”¹⁷ Slaves lived under strict limitations and control, but free black people experienced similar restrictions. The law required free persons of color to obtain a guardian. They also needed to carry paperwork proving their freedom. A written grant of freedom was the only valid method of proving independence. Whether free or slave, black people could not preach, either sporadically or as a career, without a license. Limits also extended to the number of black people who could congregate in a single place at one time. Georgia’s laws also prohibited free persons of color from carrying or owning any guns.¹⁸ Rich white elites noticed that comingling between slaves and poor whites created problems, so officials instituted laws to pacify the “white fears over the growing number of slaves.”¹⁹ Despite the dire living conditions of the poor whites, their lives remained better than the lives of enslaved or free persons of color, because at least they owned their own time.

¹⁶ U. S. Census Office, Population Schedules, Ga., 8th Census of the United States--1860, Roll 149 (Schedule 2).

¹⁷ Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom*, xxiii.

¹⁸ *Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Georgia, Passed In Milledgeville, At an Annual Session in November and December, 1833 Vol. 1*, Section 8, 228.

¹⁹ Paul Escott, *Major Problems in the History of the American South Volume 1: The Old South* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 30.

These laws remained on the books until southern politicians began pushing for a split from the Union, and for a time after. Georgia's secession debates concluded with Robert Toombs' declaration on behalf of the Georgia Secession Convention that slavery sparked aspirations to leave the Union: "For twenty years past, the Abolitionists and their allies in the northern states, have been engaged in constant efforts to subvert our institutions, and to incite insurrection and servile war among us."²⁰ Most slave-owning Georgians, including those living in southwest Georgia, supported a break from the Union because of Abraham Lincoln's indirect threat to slavery.²¹ Though they could not prove it (and did not need to), planters and Democratic politicians campaigned that the Republicans intended to end slavery. Georgia and other southern states succeeded in keeping Lincoln off the ballot. Race-related contentions continued to escalate throughout the secession debates and into the Civil War. Slaves made up one-third of the Confederate population, and southerners wished to use these blacks to drive the agricultural economy so that whites could go off to war.²² According to historian David Williams, "[Slaves] supplied labor for transportation, industry, and constructing fortifications. And as productivity demands increased, slaves were driven beyond the

²⁰ Georgia, *Convention of the People* (1861: Milledgeville and Savannah, Ga.); *Journal of the Public and Secret Proceedings of the Convention of the People of Georgia: Held in Milledgeville and Savannah in 1861, Together with the Ordinances Adopted*, (Milledgeville, GA: Boughton, Nesbit, & Barnes, 1861), 112-113.

²¹ O'Donovan, "Transforming Work," 95. Thirty delegates from Baker County traveled to Macon to take part in an immediate secession rally in August 1860; O'Donovan, *Becoming Free*, 64-65. Southerners sought to protect the institution of slavery by force, they formed groups known as vigilante committees to target any pro-Union whites. One of these bands attacked Baker County's William Kelley early in 1860. Nearly a dozen armed men ran Kelley off his farm because they believed Kelley uttered pro-Lincoln remarks. At the same time, a similar group tore through a Mitchell County neighborhood and uprooted an estimated five alleged Unionists.

²² Donald Stoker, *The Grand Design: Strategy and the U.S. Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 23.

breaking point.”²³ Intensified workload coupled with their hatred of slavery prompted blacks to fight for their own freedom, they “were not simply waiting for either God or the Yankees to give them freedom. They were taking it for themselves.”²⁴

On January 7, 1861, the *New York Times* printed an anonymous letter from an educated Georgian that lamented his displeasure with secession. Any poor white southerner who supported a break from the Union, he argued, appeared brainwashed by the slaveholding elite. Supporters simply adopted the slaveholders’ beliefs. White commoners benefited more from opposing any changes in allegiance because those arguing for secession owned slaves. These people not only desired protection for the institution of slavery, but also the return of runaways to their owners in the South. Secession neither benefited the poor whites of the state nor the region as a whole, he argued.²⁵ While this article represented only one Georgian’s views, the author of the anonymous letter voiced widespread sentiments.²⁶

Approximately a week later, the same newspaper ran another story outlining a grim future for the independent Confederate States of America. Southerners understood that with the formation of a new government, circumstances allowed for the eventual

²³ David Williams, *Rich Man’s War: Class, Caste, and Confederate Defeat in the Lower Chattahoochee Valley* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 152.

²⁴ David Williams, *A People’s History of the Civil War: Struggles for the Meaning of Freedom* (New York: The New Press, 2005), 327.

²⁵ “The Disunion Crisis; What A Southern Freeman Thinks. The Causes and Tendency of the Great Disunion Conspiracy,” 7 January 1861, *New York Times Archive*, 20 October 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/1861/01/07/news/disunion-crisis-what-southern-freeman-thinks-causes-tendency-great-disunion.html>.

²⁶ This idea that slavery hurts poor white southerners on the eve of the Civil War is manifested throughout the 1857 publication of Hinton Rowan Helper’s *The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet it*. Helper outlines that slavery was economically destructive to nonslaveholding whites and should have been abandoned slavery for this reason. The economic debate over slavery has been more recently written about in David Williams’ *Bitterly Divided* in 2008.

growth of the black population to become the majority. The article argued that newly sovereign Southern states had no other choice than to expand southward. Here, blacks grew darker with their near proximity to the equator. European immigrants settled in the Union rather than the Confederacy. Thus, no chance existed for any increases in the white population other than birth.²⁷ Such opinions remained common and similar racial sentiments existed throughout the state and nation.²⁸

Free blacks and slaves heard contradictory information from whites and their fellow blacks about Abraham Lincoln's plan to end the South's peculiar institution. Did the future hold freedom or slavery? Conflicting views over the continuance of slavery affected those kept in servitude, but they clearly desired freedom. Countless accounts claimed that blacks prayed earnestly for the defeat of the Confederacy in the war and for the end of the institution that kept them subjugated. According to Louis Meadows, "everybody hoped Master Lincoln would conquer" for this reason.²⁹ To keep slaves in order, slave owners took drastic measures. For example, planters altered religious thought to maintain their control by developing "an elaborate religious and ethical rationale rooted in doctrines of paternalist reciprocity and Christian Stewardship." Southerners, however, also utilized this technique during the antebellum era. Clarence Mohr argued that slave owners distorted religious thought, "Southern

²⁷"The Southern Confederacy; Its Growth and Fate. New Relations of Property New Ideas of Government War of Races and Religion Final Destruction," 11 January 1861, *New York Times Archive*, 20 October 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/1861/01/11/news/southern-confederacy-its-growth-fate-new-relations-property-new-ideas-government.html>.

²⁸ These racial sentiments on slavery, or the expansion of the institution, are evident in George Fitzhugh's *Sociology for the South: Or the Failure of Free Society and Cannibals All! Or Slaves Without Masters* (1854 and 1857 respectively), Fitzhugh argues that slavery was so effective that it should be expanded to include poor whites as well. Also, Williams addresses this issue in his *Bitterly Divide*.

²⁹ Williams, *The Civil War*, 326.

theologians...amassed biblical evidence that slavery was part and parcel of a rational and divinely sanctioned ordering of the universe.”³⁰

The Civil War placed Georgia’s slaves in a pivotal position. They found themselves located at the crossroads of freedom, between the unknown, which existed in their dreams and prayers, and real life. Here, they lived a life sentence of servitude. In 1863 southwest Georgia, slaves sold for as high as \$3,500 each. In 1864, the year following the Emancipation Proclamation, slaves sold for nearly \$5,000. Widespread inflation in the Confederacy spiked prices, but questions remained over what to do with slaves placed on the auction block because “there might not be enough work to keep all the slaves busy.”³¹

During the war, masters became crueler than ever before. However, the masters’ exorbitant demands of their slaves caused a backlash because African Americans began to find ways to slack on their duties. Planters had no prison or jail to send their unruly slaves; therefore, punishment entailed pain or death. More importantly, slave owners punished their slaves freely without fear of persecution or incarceration. Lack of respect or regard for a white woman remained the highest crime of slaves. Even accusations called for quick and certain loss of life.³²

Slaves became more resistant to being whipped, the main source of reprimand to demonstrate African American inferiority because of its association with the punishment of unruly slaves. Reports indicate slaves openly ignoring their masters’ threats of

³⁰Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom*, xxv.

³¹ Williams, *Rich Man’s War*, 151-52.

³² Ibid., 152-53.

punishment, an action punishable by death. Slave owners handed such reprimands out at will, especially when slaves used weapons to attack their overseers. The best tactic for slaves to avoid punishment was running away.³³

Reports of slaves looting massive amounts of planters' farming inventory, such as tools, flooded the media. Newspapers also intensified negative race relations by reports of localized events, although often-exaggerated accounts found their way into print.³⁴ The July 15, 1861 edition of the Columbus *Sun* conveyed a message about slaves' continued unruliness.³⁵ The *Sun*'s article described a potential slave insurrection within Mitchell County, which the county's vigilante committee discovered before the uprising began. Not much is known about this incident, but it involved Samuel Edwards, William McLendon, James Patillo, Romulus Weeks, Stephen G. W. Wood, John C. Morgan, and Ephraim McLeod, white citizens of Mitchell County who allegedly "tamper[ed] with negroes since old Abe's election." James Patillo masterminded this would-be rebellion. The plot involved arming slaves and inciting an insurrection in Mitchell County. Once the blacks were armed, the objective was to "butcher the good citizens of the county." White perpetrators were punished by whipping. Whipping epitomized the most embarrassing method of punishment for whites because of its association with slavery

³³ Ibid., 155-56.

³⁴ Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom*, 3-20. In Chapter 1, "Harpers Ferry and the Limits of White Paternalism," focused on the impact of John Brown's raid on southern whites. They grew paranoid of northerners in the South, but when a stronghold of abolition failed to take effect in the South, planters turned their sights on an easier group to control. The slaves became the target of malicious attacks, especially noteworthy in newspaper articles throughout the Civil War.

³⁵ This story included no obvious fabrications. Camilla's slave uprising emerged as one of three confirmed interracial riots taking place during the Civil War in south Georgia; the second being in Calhoun County, and the third being John Vickery's plan in Brooks County. David Williams, "Civil War Slave Conspiracy" (presentation for marker dedication, a part of Civil War 150 marker project, given in Quitman, Georgia, November 22, 2010). Also, Williams, *The Civil War*, 334-335.

and black inferiority. The county banished the instigators of the potential slave uprising, forcing them to leave their residences and to never return to Mitchell County.³⁶

Slave uprisings were a constant threat in southwest Georgia, which kept militiamen on guard. Worried Georgia citizens appealed to Governor Joseph E. Brown for more guards to quell the rebellions planned by blacks. Paranoia swept the state, resulting in the death of several innocent slaves and free persons of color during the war. The Georgia state legislature reacted with laws to quell any slave riots before they ever got started.³⁷ The laws defined and punished “Vagrancy in free persons of color” and, according to Clarence Mohr, they “formed the core of the state’s legal assault on free blacks.”³⁸

On December 16, 1861, the General Assembly of Georgia passed a law that made burning a railroad bridge illegal. This was arson and the result was the sentence of death. The side notes proclaimed that the bill targeted slaves or free persons of color, making this statute stand out.³⁹ The law demonstrated that whites feared slaves in Georgia would assert their own freedom rather than wait for emancipation. State legislature also forced slaves to live on their master’s land and banned skilled labor among slaves during the war. Slaves also lost the ability to leave the plantation on which they lived without expressed written consent from their owner.⁴⁰

³⁶Williams, *Rich Man’s War*, 157; Columbus *Sun*, July 15, 1861.

³⁷ Williams, *Rich Man’s War*, 157-158.

³⁸Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom*, 14.

³⁹*Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Georgia, Passed in Milledgeville, At an Annual Session in November and December, 1861, Vol. 1, Section 3, 69.* Side note refers to handwritten notes on the side of the document.

⁴⁰Williams, *Rich Man’s War*, 158.

In December 1863, the General Assembly allowed the state to invest in Confederate stocks, bonds, land, or slaves. When investing in enslaved blacks, the legislation required the buyer to record from whom they purchased the property and when the transaction took place. Surrendering such records to state officials or judges in the buyer's local area became mandatory.⁴¹ Georgia also placed other restrictions on black people during the war, known more commonly as black codes. The most serious law required free people of color to register with a white guardian, and in most cases, this guardian was responsible for writing passes that allowed freedmen to travel around town. Georgia's legislature even considered selling free black people back into slavery if they refused to register with a guardian.⁴²

Despite the limitations placed upon them, slaves' visions of freedom surpassed temporary restraints. Even with continued newspaper reports of unruly slaves, militiamen placed more emphasis on their own affairs and on draft-dodgers and deserters. Towards the end of the war, the once fear-provoking Home Guard seemed little more than a nuisance to slaves in southwest Georgia. Subsequently, some black men enlisted in the Union army.⁴³ The slaves' responsibilities to their families at home overshadowed their desire for freedom during the Civil War. For this reason, only few slaves left southwest Georgia to fight for the Union.⁴⁴ Most free persons of color during the war from this region found their escape through the need of salt. Black workers, forced by

⁴¹*Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Georgia Passed in Milledgeville, At an Annual Session in November and December, 1863; Also, Extra Session of 1864 Vol. 1, Section 1, 29.*

⁴² Williams, *Rich Man's War*, 159.

⁴³ Ibid., 159-161.

⁴⁴ O'Donovan, *Becoming Free*, 2.

their owners, aided in saltworks in Florida and here some slaves found their way to Union ships. In 1862, for example, Navy ships confiscated almost a dozen black men near Apalachicola. The next year, Union soldiers rescued another twelve slaves along the Ochlocknee River, which flows through southwest Georgia. Slaves also reached freedom in Union slave raids in both Sumter and Decatur Counties.⁴⁵

By 1865, slaves demonstrated their desire to escape frequently. This action most visibly indicated slaves' attitudes towards their owners during the Civil War. Escaping remained the clearest repudiation of work ever demonstrated in the history of American labor, and slaveholders targeted slaves after the war in similar ways to the antebellum era.⁴⁶ Struggles in some cases were incredibly harsh, but in the words of Ella Hawkins, a young slave from Muscogee County, Georgia, "Us is going to be free!"⁴⁷

Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and the Union's victory may have ended slavery, but changes were slow in southwest Georgia. The life experiences of slaves affected their decisions as freedmen. For example, ex-slaves aligned politically with the Republican Party, which offered emancipation. The violent environment during Reconstruction was a harsh existence for blacks comparable only to slavery. These people had worked their entire lives without monetary compensation. In the Democratic South, white voters knew freedmen were Republicans, a political designation intensified by an overwhelming amount of racism in the South. This attitude played a major role in

⁴⁵ O'Donovan, *Becoming Free*, 91-91.

⁴⁶ Williams, *Rich Man's War*, 164-167.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 154.

the oppression of African Americans during Reconstruction, which kept blacks subjugated and tyrannized.

The end of the Civil War introduced a new southern mindset for whites. Southern nationalistic pride, previously tied to their state or region, declined. These former Confederates had strong feelings about the resiliency of the South, but the defeat made that confidence unrealistic. Power shifted towards the North, and the South had no choice but to accept this. A series of mandatory constitutional conventions held in the South in 1865 endorsed re-admittance into the Union and, ultimately, representation in Congress. The modest conventions, designed and conducted by northern officials, avoided radical changes.⁴⁸

Vice President Andrew Johnson, a Southern Democrat from Tennessee, rose to the presidency following the death of his predecessor.⁴⁹ President Johnson's actions benefited the South, rather than punish the region. He appeared more sympathetic to poor whites than to the South's newly freed blacks. Johnson began his Reconstruction plan in the summer of 1865 while Congress was out of session, which demonstrated Johnson's belief that the President held the authority to oversee Reconstruction.⁵⁰

Johnson called for an oath from southerners that excluded all white landowners whose property value exceeded \$19,999, unless they individually petitioned the president

⁴⁸ George Justice, "Conventional Wisdom: Georgia State Constitutional Conventions and the Transformation of Nationalism from Republic to Modern American State, 1777-1877," (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Georgia, 2008), 357-58.

⁴⁹ Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 332-336. Here, Foner points out that when Lincoln died at 7 A.M. on April 15, 1865, he did not have a clear route for Reconstruction. Perhaps, he would have manufactured a new plan, other than the ten percent plan, since he utilized a different approach on each state that underwent provisions of Reconstruction during the war. However, the ten percent plan was all that Lincoln actually committed to in writing.

⁵⁰ Justice, "Conventional Wisdom," 361-362.

of the United States for an exemption.⁵¹ However, former Confederate leaders were prohibited from taking this oath. Johnson also called for elections to state constitutional conventions. He tasked the convention delegates with producing a pro-Union constitution. Johnson's plan also called for the creation of state governments that demonstrated friendly relations with and support of the national government.⁵² This plan, however, forced blacks to "remain forever outside the bounds of citizenship."⁵³

Political turmoil defined Georgia following the end of the war. Governor Joe Brown attempted to assemble a state government, but Union forces arrested Brown and sent him north. The president appointed James Johnson as provisional governor. Governor Johnson called for a convention to produce a new state constitution in 1865. Anyone who had taken the oath under Andrew Johnson's Reconstruction plan had the opportunity to run as a delegate. The convention's main goal was restoring positive relations with the federal government, especially since northerners or northern supporters supervised the South's conventions. James Johnson remained determined to complete his job of restoring a satisfactory Georgia state government.⁵⁴

Black Codes, along with southern rejection of the Fourteenth Amendment, caused a major change in 1866. Midterm elections of the same year indicated a repudiation of such Democratic measures. Republicans capitalized on these sentiments and gained a strong majority in both houses of Congress. The Republican-dominated Congress

⁵¹ In May 1865, this \$20,000 property value roughly translates to \$266,666.67, according to the Consumer Price Index of 2010.

⁵² Justice, "Conventional Wisdom," 362-363.

⁵³ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 184.

⁵⁴ Justice, "Conventional Wisdom," 363-64.

demonstrated a desire to help ex-slaves, but some wanted to punish the South especially since southerners proved hesitant to accept the terms of Reconstruction as of 1866.⁵⁵

Congress passed the first Radical Reconstruction Acts and called for another series of constitutional conventions. The acts also divided the South into military districts. Georgia opened voting rights to all males over twenty-one, as long as they maintained residency in the state of Georgia for more than one year. States needed to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment before they qualified for admittance into the Union, which also required a new state constitution. Because no provisions for naming an interim governor of the state existed, power rested with military officials.⁵⁶

The October 1865 convention, held in Georgia's then capital city, Milledgeville, hosted representatives from every Georgian county. Some delegates consisted of members from the 1861 secession convention, but the majority of the delegates were newcomers to state conventions. This group concentrated on declaring secession null and void. Georgia adhered to the articles of Reconstruction reform, and by 1867, all southern states had met plans to reenter the Union. The entire region had abolished the institution of slavery, waived war debts, and professed that their secession was invalid.⁵⁷

Shortly after the closing of these conventions throughout the South, all states began passing laws that reduced freedoms and liberties granted to former slaves. Black Codes in Reconstruction were "a series of state laws that would play a crucial role in the undoing of Presidential Reconstruction." This marked an extension and, in many ways, a

⁵⁵ Justice, "Conventional Wisdom," 368.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 369.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 364-67.

harsher version of the black codes than what existed during and before the war.

Freedmen needed to sign contracts with plantation owners in order to be employed and were punished if they failed to adhere to this requirement. Georgia passed legislation that made theft of farm animals a capital crime. The state also passed laws to limit the ways in which blacks could earn an income.⁵⁸

White Democrats viewed Georgia's convention of 1867-1868 as a puppet of the federal government. The main accomplishment in the fall elections, however, allowed black males to cast ballots for delegates to the new state constitutional convention. General John Pope divided the state into more than forty voting districts to maximize voter turnout. Three members, two whites and one black, chaired each district, and each had an economic incentive to register as many voters as possible, receiving fifteen cents for every voter registered by each board. Pope then forced a movement of the convention site from Milledgeville to Atlanta. Rumors of violence, accompanied by the fact that hotels in Milledgeville refused to put up black delegates, prompted the decision to change the venue. White voters decided not to take part in the election because they felt northerners had dictated their constitutional conventions, which resulted in the election of a higher number of black delegates.⁵⁹

White Georgians refused to submit to defeat and resorted to fear-inducing tactics to reestablish control during Reconstruction. Black delegates feared for their lives after being elected; some delegates refused to report to the convention in 1867-1868. Despite this absence, Republicans remained in charge throughout the affair. Unfortunately, no

⁵⁸ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 199-203.

⁵⁹ Justice, "Conventional Wisdom," 370.

provisions in the state constitution specifically allowed blacks to hold office. This oversight played a major role in the political unrest of the 1868 campaign season and, ultimately, in the Camilla Massacre. The convention drafted a new state constitution that permanently moved the capital from Milledgeville to Atlanta.⁶⁰ More importantly, the new constitution made all people citizens living in Georgia that were born in the United States, and also allowed black men to vote and abolished slavery.⁶¹ Pope's provisions for the convention also required citizens to vote on the new constitution, and in a closely contested election, the state's black and white voters ratified the constitution in April 1868.⁶²

While the state and local developments were important in the broader scheme of Reconstruction, the establishment of the Freedmen's Bureau in southwest Georgia played a major role in leading up to the Camilla Massacre. The bureau was important for assisting freedmen in the transition from slave to free labor, it was a strong support of the black franchise. The Freedmen's Bureau also recorded documents of violence, including affidavits following the Camilla riot, which the majority of this study is based upon.

Prior to the arrival of the Freedmen's Bureau, blacks continued life as usual. They still worked in the fields, as they had during slavery. In fact, "All the people thought they were slaves." Although the news took time, blacks and whites had learned about the defeat of the Confederate Army at Appomattox. While the news was obviously bad for slaveowners, they ignored any such conversations of defeat and refused to give up their slaves. In mid-May of 1865, Union soldiers first arrived in the southwestern

⁶⁰ Ibid., 370-371.

⁶¹ *Constitution of Georgia of 1868*, Article 1, Section 2; Article 2, Section 2; Article 1, Section 4.

⁶² Justice, "Conventional, Wisdom," 370-371.

region of the state, an area isolated from the Civil War's devastation. While the army left behind a small number of soldiers and established garrisons, abolition was not their objective. These troops were responsible for ending the Confederacy, capturing politicians and high-ranking military personnel.⁶³

Slaveowners in southwest Georgia refused to accept Lincoln's emancipation. They continued treating their black workers as slaves and justified their position by stating emancipation had only been a wartime measure and they believed the federal government would reinstitute slavery since the war was over. Many more believed that the federal government would create a new system of slavery that resembled antebellum servitude. The arrival of a federal inspector to this area of the state in June 1865 marked an important shift in the Reconstruction of the southwestern corner of the Georgia. This advisor believed that the only way for planters and small slaveholders to agree to manumit their slaves would be the stationing of Freedmen's Bureau agents in every city and country town.⁶⁴

Black activism, however, existed outside of the Freedmen's Bureau, which arrived in southwest Georgia in November 1865. Delegates in Augusta had established the Georgia Equal Rights Association (GERA) in January 1866. This group, as evident from its name, sought equality for freedmen. They also wanted the government to sell land to blacks at inexpensive prices. When this meeting ended, its delegates returned to their regions responsible for starting local entities of the GERA. Dougherty County's Equal Rights Association (ERA) suffered from poor record keeping and for such reasons

⁶³ O'Donovan, *Becoming Free*, 113-114.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 114-115.

their fractured existence left a virtually nonexistent paper trail. Blacks from Wilkes County, including Wallace Sherman, moved to southeast Dougherty County after renting nearly 500 acres with bureau assistance. Whites from Dougherty County strongly opposed the migrants (an estimated 150) and especially the freedmen's refusal to work on white-owned farmland. The black farmhands elected to grow and harvest their own crops at the Whitlock Place. Meanwhile, Sherman and other Dougherty ERA leaders wanted to establish similar plantations in surrounding counties. Despite laws forbidding freedmen from leaving the fields they worked, many showed up at weekly meetings hosted by Dougherty County's ERA. This popularity came at a price, the ERA required its members to pay an initiation fee, but also forced them to remain in secrecy about any of the entity's plans or meetings. Local whites, however, learned of Dougherty's ERA and whereas the ERA kept quiet about their doings not to alarm the whites, their secrecy terrified local planters and overseers. A group of sixty-one farm owners and concerned citizens sent a petition complaining about the ERA to Lieutenant H. C. Strong, aid to the subassistant commissioner in Albany.⁶⁵

Strong forwarded to the petition to the state bureau office.⁶⁶ Lieutenant T. F. Forbes, on behalf of the state office, disregarded white Albany's petition. The letter failed to document "in what particular manner the Society is detrimental to the best interest of free labor." Shortly after the victory, Dougherty County's ERA combined

⁶⁵ Lee Formwalt, "Documenting the Origins of African-American Politics in Southwest Georgia," *The Journal of Southwest Georgia History* 8 (Fall 1993), 1-8. Included in these sixty-one signers were F. F. Putney and V. H. Flagg, both were carpetbaggers involved in the Camilla Massacre, but here in 1866 their concerns were more in line with many other large farmers in southwest Georgia.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 9; 5. Lieutenant Strong was not a friend of Dougherty County's freedmen. Blacks "charged him with 'a lack of interest in their affairs.' Six days after the planters presented their petition to Strong, he was mustered out of service and he turned over the Albany bureau office to local agent and planter William Issac Vason."

with the local Union League since both entities favored black suffrage. This marked the end of the ERA as a black political entity, from this point on (August 1866) there was no mention of ERA affiliation when referring to freedmen politicians. The GERA and later the Union League supplied freedmen in southwest Georgia with a foundation for political organization. By the time Radical Reconstruction arrived in 1867, blacks in Dougherty and surrounding counties were prepared to vote and campaign for political office. Philip Joiner ascended to the office of president of the Union League, which afforded him the opportunity and the voice to not only be elected as a delegate for the 1867-1868 constitutional convention but also as representative in the state legislature in April 1868. This political background gave blacks better opportunities to establish themselves after receiving the right to vote.⁶⁷

Although the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau) had been created in March 1865, it would take much longer to reach the isolated lands of southwest Georgia. In May, General Oliver Otis Howard became head of the newly formed institution, a position he would hold until the bureau's dissolution in 1871. The Freedmen's Bureau suffered from a lack of work force brought on by the low allotment of funds. Rufus Saxton was the Freedmen's Bureau's assistant commissioner for Georgia, South Carolina and Florida until September 1865. Saxton, during the summer, appointed only six local agents, four of whom were stationed along the coast. The remainder of the state shared two officials, John Emory Bryant and Edward A. Wild. Bryant was from Maine and would later become a major player in the state Republican Party. Wild was a Union veteran, but would only hold his position until his peculiar actions cost him his job in September. Saxton's supervising led a federal official who

⁶⁷ Ibid., 9-11.

toured Georgia to remark, “The affairs of the Bureau have been very badly managed in Georgia—or rather have not been managed at all.”⁶⁸

O. O. Howard, obviously upset at the news, created a position of assistant commissioner of Georgia outside of the coastal area. Howard appointed Brigadier General Davis Tillson to this new post. Tillson brought a great deal of leadership experience to Georgia. While Tillson fought against discriminations committed against slaves and free persons of color during the war and was a strong supporter for the recruitment of black soldiers, he was not the best candidate for the job. Tillson did not openly support black enfranchisement, but he did back the betterment of blacks outside of the political realm. The new assistant commissioner felt that slavery had hindered the ability of blacks to understand the complexities found in the white society. Tillson’s message to Georgia’s all-white constitutional convention of 1865 best demonstrated this point, he stated that blacks’ “dense ignorance, their inability to understand or comprehend the meaning of freedom, its rights and duties, is what makes it so extremely difficult to influence and manage them.”⁶⁹

Tillson did increase the number of agents in southwest Georgia, sending one to Albany and one to Thomasville in November 1865. Rufus Saxton, Tillson’s predecessor, had been successful at recruiting Union veterans for positions in South Carolina, but Tillson failed in this attempt. This forced Tillson to appeal to the 1865 constitutional convention delegates, which allowed him to save “those he had for the most important

⁶⁸ O’Donovan, *Becoming Free*, 115-117.

⁶⁹ Paul A. Cimbala, *Under the Guardianship of the Nation: The Freedmen’s Bureau and the Reconstruction of Georgia, 1865-1870* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1997), 5-7.

positions and filling the remainder with civilians.”⁷⁰ The majority of residents from this region hesitated in welcoming bureau officials. Historian Susan E. O’Donovan wrote that, “Southwest Georgians would encounter the Bureau on much the same terms as they encountered the army; indirectly and from a distance.” Ex-slaves from the area grew tired of waiting for assistance to arrive at their doorsteps. Very few of these ex-slaves had ever ventured away from their places of employment. Kentucky occupation troops awaited those that escaped, these Yankee soldiers cared more for southern whites than they did for blacks. A number of freedmen, however, encountered Clara Barton in Sumter County, who carried their complaints and reports of injuries back to Congress.⁷¹

A majority of freedmen continued to stay on the plantations and farms with their former masters because of a lack of finances rather than a declaration of positive relations. Even the staunchest of former Confederate supporters eventually accepted the end of slavery and freed their former slaves “who probably already considered themselves free.” This development in the summer of 1865 allowed a major component of the bureau to materialize, this was mediating labor contracts in southwest Georgia.⁷²

Labor contracts constituted much of the Freedmen’s Bureau’s time early in its existence in southwest Georgia. Tillson felt that black’s performing their duties as paid workers was the only way freedmen could receive other civil or political rights and that was only if they worked “cheerfully and faithfully.” Daniel S. McCoy, bureau agent in Terrell County, watched in disgust as ex-slaves chose to leave the area rather than signing

⁷⁰ O’Donovan, “Transforming Work,” 231. Tillson’s decision to use Union soldiers for the “most important positions” did not include Albany’s agents.

⁷¹ O’Donovan, *Becoming Free*, 117-119.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 121-130.

contracts, leaving McCoy to request military assistance in forcing Terrell County freedmen to enter into labor contracts. McCoy also included provisions that forbade contracted workers to leave the country. This strategy left another southern agent, William Walker, happily “at a loss for words to express...[and] I have not one vagrant to report.” These southern agents manipulated their appointments in order to fill their own needs or those of their families or neighbors. Joseph Taylor, agent for Randolph County, Julius Gatewood, from Baker County, and Dougherty’s William Vason all used their power for these means.⁷³ In 1865, Dougherty County’s Benjamin Yancey entered into contracts with his workers that stretched well beyond labor details. Yancey required his black employees to remain sober and limited church attendance to his own property (and he allowed only his workers to attend).⁷⁴ Labor contracts overseen by Freedmen’s Bureau agents in southwest Georgia for 1865 averaged eleven dollars per month.⁷⁵ Muscogee County’s Thomas Barter entered into a labor contract the next year with a freedman named Isaac and his wife. Barter required his workers “to be faithful, industrious and honest, to obey all reasonable commands of the said *Thos P Bartie* or his agent, and conduct *Themselves* in all things, in a proper manner.” Barter’s limitations were not as specific as Yancey’s, but his intentions were no doubt the same, get the most

⁷³ O’Donovan, “Transforming Work,” 233-237.

⁷⁴ Formwalt, “Documenting the Origins” 3.

⁷⁵ O’Donovan, “Transforming Work,” 242. “Bureau approved contracts drawn up by planters in southwest Georgia stipulated average payments of ten to twelve dollars a month for male hands, six to nine for equivalent female hands, and ten to fifteen dollars a month for mechanics and house servants. Women with children and half and old hands received less.”

work for the least amount of money. Muscogee County's planter offered his workers sixteen dollars a month, for both workers (well below the 1865 average).⁷⁶

Early in 1866, the year that the Freedmen's Bureau's temporary existence expired, President Andrew Johnson vetoed the bill that renewed the agency. This put added stress on Davis Tillson, but also for southwest Georgia's assistant commissioner, F. A. H. Gaebel. Gaebel felt that Johnson's actions gave the wrong impression to the region's residents, who believed the president's veto expressed their "right to do as [they] pleased." Georgia's Governor Charles Jenkins eventually stepped in to assure his fellow citizens that the Freedmen's Bureau still had authority within the state.⁷⁷

This authority continued to dwindle in the remaining months of 1866. In October, Tillson moved his headquarters to Savannah in order to focus more on coastal Georgia. A report filed by F. D. Sewell in December ended Tillson's tenure as leader of the Freedmen's Bureau in Georgia. Sewell concluded that, Georgia's "administration is not altogether satisfactory to the colored people." Caleb Sibley assumed command in January 1867 and he believed that the current system was not sufficient. Sibley divided the state into ten separate subdistricts and placed a subassistant commissioner in each district. This allowed Sibley to better control the entire state from his office. Tillson's appointments were only safe under Sibley for a short time.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Contract between Thomas P. Barter and Isaac and wife, 24 February 1866, enclosed in Christian Raushenberg to Lt. Eugene Pickett, 4 September 1867, Box 14, Letters Received, Subassistant Commissioner, Columbus, Georgia, Records of the Field Officers for the State of Georgia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Record Group 15, National Archives Building, Washington D.C. in Paul A. Cimbala, *The Freedmen's Bureau: Reconstructing the American South after the Civil War* (Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 2005).

⁷⁷ Cimbala, *Guardianship*, 37-38.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

Effective 20 February 1867, O. O. Howard handed down his decision that Freedmen's Bureau agents could no longer collect consulting fees. Charging former slaverowners so that the bureau could mediate contract negotiations caused them not to request assistance. Sibley knew that canceling the fee would spark massive resignations among civilian agents. This initially caused Sibley to panic, but eventually he saw the benefits of such a movement. The assistant commissioner began looking for Union supporters to fill the would-be vacant positions.⁷⁹

Sibley wanted this transition early in 1867 but as months passed, civilian agents remained. The assistant commissioner requested all agents under him to take loyalty oaths. As they refused, these civilian agents were relieved of their duties. Sibley hoped that his new regime would focus on the betterment of freedmen in Georgia. "By August 1, 1867, out of a total of forty-four agents, there were twenty Northerners—twenty three if men who had come south before the war are included. Of these Yankees at least fifteen were Union veterans."⁸⁰

At the same time as the Freedmen's Bureau changed its personnel and approach, Congress transitioned into Radical Reconstruction. The agents in southwest Georgia also experienced these changes. F. A. H. Gaebel utilized locals to conduct his business until O. H. Howard became agent for Gaebel's area in March 1867. In October 1867, the southwest Georgia subassistant commissioner's office moved from Cuthbert to Albany when Howard was appointed subassistant commissioner. Howard's bureau agents reporting to him were C. C. Hicks from October 1867 to January 1868, William Pierce in

⁷⁹ Ibid., 42-43.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 43-45.

December 1867, and Christian Rauschenburg from January to November 1868. Howard would leave his position in December 1868, as would most agents and subassistant commissioners as this was when most of the Freedmen's Bureau's operations ended.⁸¹ The change in Freedmen's Bureau personnel gave freedmen a fair chance of having their voices heard.⁸²

Postwar political developments in the United States and in Georgia added to political and racial turmoil already intensified by the war. Within this framework, Camilla neared its entrance onto the national stage. The political, social, economic and cultural turmoil created after emancipation pushed white Georgians to commit violence, and they chose this action repeatedly.

⁸¹ Records of the Field Offices for the State of Georgia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1872. United States Congress and National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., M1903, 78.

⁸² O. H. Howard played an important role in Camilla's riot, but his record keeping makes him valuable to Reconstruction southwest Georgia history.

Chapter III

“NO ACTION BY CIVIL AUTHORITIES”

Reconstruction produced frequent violence and racial contention.¹ This aggression manifested itself in people’s everyday lives even without political provocation. Because of the political hostility, factions or parties needed to clearly identify their mission and alliances to their followers. However, a political party’s primary mission was to facilitate a candidate’s election to office. Such organizations existed in order to address a particular demand, which focused on these ideas, for example, equality, voting rights, and equal protection, until social, political, or economic forces changed; the change brought a renewed interest in the group. Such was the case for the Republican Party, because as Reconstruction progressed, Republicans became a dying breed. Still, though many southerners used politics to justify their prejudices, Reconstruction violence stemmed significantly from racism rather than political conflict.

Southwest Georgia underwent two forms of violence in 1868: individual attacks and a race riot. The riot originated from the assault on political marchers in Camilla, Georgia. Citizens of this small town ambushed Republican marchers as they entered Camilla. The victims of this riot had little efficient means of protection. While the source of this attack involved politics, as most riots did during Reconstruction, race functioned as the catalyst of the Camilla Massacre. Politics played a role only as a

¹ For lists of violence which occurred throughout 1868 in southwest Georgia, see Appendix A (drawn from “Report of Outrages,” prepared by the Freedmen’s Bureau).

justification for those who instigated the attack. Race and politics were difficult to separate during Reconstruction, but the local white citizen's manhunt for freedmen following the ambush on the courthouse square suggest race as the main motive.

Even before the fall 1868 elections, racial attacks on freedmen transpired daily without political motive. These assaults exhibited a reoccurring theme: no punishment necessarily awaited a white person for physically assaulting freedmen. The blacks' newly acquired rights following emancipation triggered the excessive number of assaults during Reconstruction. Whites demonstrated that equality would only arrive at a price. The white citizens believed that in order for freedmen to gain rights and liberties, whites must lose their own privileges as a matter of balance. The thought appears absurd in retrospect but offers explanation and insight into the 1868 violence.

The violent state of affairs in southwest Georgia set the backdrop for the Camilla Massacre, a violence that served to validate white superiority. Whites were determined to curb black movement as well as to reestablish control over the former slave population. Evidence of violent oppression and the lack of accountability as displayed during Camilla's riot ensued in smaller episodes throughout southwest Georgia. The unpunished attacks encouraged even more violent episodes, creating a vicious cycle of bloodshed. Eventually, these practices became a part of the common culture; whites unreservedly expressed their aversion toward their black neighbors, differing very little from slavery.

The 1868 assaults that led up to the Camilla Massacre disclose other insights into the widespread oppression in southwest Georgia. In 1912, during the Prohibition Movement in the early twentieth century, T.J. Butler, mayor of Camilla in 1868, gave a

speech upon returning to his old town. Butler said that when he held the office of mayor, a great number of alcoholics resided in the town. He confessed that he also suffered from heavy drinking and admitted that he and town marshal Tom J. Bailey ruled the city ruthlessly. In his defense, the former mayor claimed, “The fine points of the law were ignored and a code of common sense submitted.”²

Attacks throughout the year 1868 can be broken down into two categories: black on black and white on black. The perpetrators of black on black crimes was often held accountable, whereas orchestrators of white on black violence often escaped investigation and apprehension. An examination of each, beginning with black on black, will greatly demonstrate the meaning of each category of crime during Reconstruction.

In Dougherty County, Georgia, on February 9, freedman Michael Johnson shot fellow black Moses Shannon. Johnson disappeared following the assault.³ On the tenth, freedman John Thomas attacked Dougherty County resident and fellow freedman Major Parker with an axe. Authorities arrested Thomas soon after the attack at the urging of the Freedmen’s Bureau. The case never went to trial because Parker dropped the charges, but this left Thomas responsible for all expenses involved with the case.⁴ West Hill stabbed a fellow black man in Calhoun County the next day for unknown reasons. Authorities arrested Hill for his crime, demonstrating a clear difference in law enforcement thinking when the assailant was a former slave.⁵ On April 11, in the same

² Margaret Spence and Anna M. Fleming, *History of Mitchell County, 1857-1976*, (Camilla: Historic Mitchell County, Inc., 1976), 100.

³“Report of Outrages Committed upon Citizens: State of Georgia from January 1st to November 15th 1868,” No. 5, 2. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 57.

⁴Ibid., No. 10, 3.

⁵Ibid., No. 19, 4.

county, freedman Benjamin Mathison “shot and killed” Isham Harden “for refusing the countersign to a Loyal League Sentinel.” Local law enforcement officers arrested Mathison and held him on a one-thousand-dollar bond.⁶ In May, freedman Lawrence Solomons appeared before a judge to declare that a black resident of Randolph County named Green McArthur attempted to bribe fellow freedman Moses Slaughter in order to get a particular candidate elected in the county.⁷ The next day, Moses Slaughter testified that no freedman, including McArthur, had ever attempted to purchase his vote.⁸ Jim Jones, a freedman from Dougherty County, went to trial in July 1868. Jones allegedly crawled under a house, raised a plank and proceeded to steal from a candy shop. Freeman Edward Hill walked up on the crime and reported Jones to the authorities. Jones was sentenced to life for stealing candy from a black-owned candy store, witnessed by another freedman. Jim Jones’s sentence was to be served in work detail.⁹ No documented black on black violence took place in 1868 after the Camilla Massacre in September.

The second category, white on black, began in January and continued for the remainder of the year. The smaller attacks throughout the year help explain the Camilla Massacre. The progression of violence foreshadowed the number of casualties associated with the massacre, and this number greatly increased with the precedence of “no action

⁶Ibid., No. 16, 4.

⁷Affidavit of Lawrence Solomons, May 4, 1868. In Governor Thomas H. Ruger, Incoming Correspondence. Record Group 1-1-5, Box 55, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, GA.

⁸Affidavit of Moses Slaughter, May 5, 1868. In Governor Thomas H. Ruger, Incoming Correspondence, Box 55,

⁹ John Darnell Sr. to Governor Rufus Bullock, August 19, 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence. Record Group 1-1-5, Box 56. Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, GA.

by civil authorities.”¹⁰ Each passing month progressed with more violence and less punishment. A white man named Henry McMillen killed freedman John Chiralier on January 11. Authorities in Mitchell County arrested the murderer but set McMillen free on \$500 bail. The bankrupt bondsmen who covered McMillen’s bail accompanied the suspect when he committed the act. Upon his release, Henry McMillen left the county and never received adequate punishment for his actions.¹¹

In Early County, George Chancey, a white businessman, murdered his employee David Hutchins on January 31, 1868. The altercation sprung from work-related disputes and ended with a gunshot. Chancey fled the county and was never incarcerated for his crime. Three days later, George Chancey’s brother, Benjamin Chancey, murdered freedman Moses Alexander. Benjamin Chancey avoided arrest and left Early County.¹²

Still, January was the safest month for black residents in southwest Georgia. Three white men in Mitchell County stabbed Solomon Brown on February 5. George Baggy, Thomas Gouldin, and James Palmer were never sentenced to prison nor did they flee the county.¹³ Four days later Robert Warren allegedly shot freedman Jack Hicks without provocation.¹⁴ Again, Warren retained his residency in Mitchell County and escaped punishment for his crime.¹⁵

¹⁰ Freedman’s Bureau, “Report of Outrages,” No. 12, 3.

¹¹ Ibid., No. 1, 1.

¹² Ibid., No. 2, 1; No. 3, 1.

¹³ Ibid., No. 4, 1.

¹⁴ Robert Warren would later threaten that whites reserved the right to shoot John Murphy if he refused to cancel the rally in Camilla.

¹⁵ Freedmen’s Bureau, “Report of Outrages,” No. 6, 2.

On February 15, Jeremiah Walters shot freedman Blaully Anthony in the abdomen. Unlike any previous scenarios, the Freedmen's Bureau apprehended Walters and handed the suspect over to local authorities. These officials set Walters' bail at the easily attainable fee of \$25. Walters appeared before a court where a jury rendered a "not guilty" verdict.¹⁶ In Early County on February 22, 1868, William Buchanan and a Dr. Powell beat a freedman named John Gibson for his allegedly radical preaching style. The Freedmen's Bureau arrested both white men and held them until they posted bail.¹⁷

While the violent assaults increased during February, there was no correlation with punishment of the perpetrators. Some attacks in March did result in arrests, but several cases lacked proper investigation. Attacks upon freedmen in southwest Georgia for the month of March began in Calhoun County on the fourth. A work scuffle escalated and James Edmondson, a white man, murdered freedman William Jourdeur. Edmondson fled the county. While no arrest resulted with this case, the governor of Georgia posted a reward for the capture of Edmondson.¹⁸ On the twelfth in Dougherty County, Mrs. Mott, a white woman who disliked the disrespectful language used by Robert Peck, shot the freedman. Local authorities arrested Mott, but Peck dropped the charges against her. Mott only had to pay court costs.¹⁹

Notably, authorities arrested Thomas for the assault of Major Parker, but he was a freedman. Authorities also dropped charges against Peck, which furthered the belief that assaulting blacks in southwest Georgia would not lead to jail time. The noticeable

¹⁶Ibid., No. 7, 2.

¹⁷Ibid., No. 8, 2.

¹⁸Ibid., No. 9, 2.

¹⁹Ibid., No. 11, 3.

attempt to capture whites responsible for assaults in February and March foreshadowed a possible positive turn in race relations. Unfortunately, the trend produced a false sense of improvement, and numerous attacks in April dispelled any such myth. Schley County officials took no actions against the person or people who attacked Moses Hart on April 1. The assailants lured Hart out of his house and shot him in the face.²⁰ On the ninth, Elisha Irwin shot Henry Jourda; Irwin fled Lee County to avoid punishment.²¹ The next day in Randolph County, Silas Grant and Benjamin Holland got into a politically motivated argument. Holland stabbed his fellow freedman and officials arrested him immediately.²²

On April 12, Lee County resident William Danson beat and shot Thomas Foster dead. Danson fled Lee County and never received punishment for murdering Foster.²³ In Terrell County, on the sixteenth, six people participated in the shooting of Peter Small. Small claimed he did not know his attackers or the reasons for the assault. Local officers logged no arrests in this case.²⁴

A heated political discussion between George Rhea and a white man, identified only as Louis, prompted an April 19 attack against Rhea in Baker County. Louis seriously wounded Rhea during the altercation. The freedman refused to press charges against Louis because of racial tensions within the county. Louis remained in Baker

²⁰Ibid., No. 12, 3.

²¹Ibid., No. 14, 3.

²²Ibid., No. 15, 3-4.

²³Ibid., No. 17, 4.

²⁴Ibid., No. 18, 4.

County and never received punishment.²⁵ On April 20, in the same county, Calhoun Dean attacked freedman Allen Wooten. In this case, similar to Rhea's, officials filed no charges, and Dean remained in Baker County.²⁶

April 22, 1868, resulted in a gruesome and fearful day for blacks in Mitchell County. The haunting day began when John Bailey attacked Joseph Took. Authorities made no arrest, and Bailey never fled the county. An unknown attacker stabbed a freedman known simply as Barron, and the report read "no actions by civil authorities." Also, Thomas R. Bailey and M. J. Blythe severely beat an unknown freedman. Local authorities recorded no reasons for the assault and failed to arrest either Bailey or Blythe. The criminals did not flee the county in fear of punishment because of the lack of forthcoming charges.²⁷

In addition to these acts of violence, an incident of voter intimidation in Camilla foreshadowed the massacre in September. Georgia held special elections in April in order to vote on the 1868 constitution and to elect officials under the new constitution, and Camilla officials requested military protection to ensure that things ran smoothly. However, aid from the army was lacking on the day of balloting. A military presence conveyed a cautionary warning as the soldiers stressed the need for peaceful relations at the polls. Camilla resident W. A. Bird took the liberty of running black men away from the polls using the guard of troops.²⁸ Bird had no authority to make such decisions, and

²⁵Ibid., No. 20, 4.

²⁶Ibid., No. 21, 5.

²⁷Ibid., No. 22, 5; No. 23, 5; No. 24, 5.

²⁸ W. A. Bird is the same person as William Byrd. Byrd also witnessed the affidavit of Mumford Poore, Sheriff of Mitchell County, and spoke well on his behalf.

his actions nearly resulted in his arrest. At approximately three in the afternoon, whites fired gunshots at freedmen. Two hours later, local whites chased a freedman across the street, and the black person took refuge inside the courthouse.²⁹

Commanding officers ordered soldiers to shoot any man who attempted to enter the courthouse in pursuit of the black man. This command never materialized. Reports claimed that an inebriated James Johns, a white citizen of Camilla who would become notorious following the ambush on the Camilla courthouse in September, waited outside the entrance, intent on shooting any soldier who tried to arrest him. Around six in the evening, Buddell Neill, a freedman, requested the dispatch of soldiers to his home. Neill stated that whites threatened him the day before and that he feared for his life. The white men wanted Neill to get down on his knees and proclaim his allegiance to the Democrats. Neill declared that he voted this way the following morning, hoping that his life would be spared.³⁰

The heightened incidences of violence in April emphasized the oppression in southwest Georgia and, specifically, in Camilla. While the attacks depreciated the lives of freedmen, the absence of justice emboldened the white offenders. Authorities responded to crimes with intense investigation only when the perpetrator was black.

On May 6, Governor Thomas Ruger received a letter detailing the murder of Harrison Maffit. William Hussey, a white teenager, murdered the freedman. An altercation ensued between the intoxicated Hussey and a freedman named Willis Favor.

²⁹ Caleb Sibley to O. O. Howard, 12 October 1868. On "Civil Unrest in Camilla, Georgia, 1868: Reconstruction, Republicanism, and Race," *Digital Library of Georgia*, accessed 8 September 2010, <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/camilla>.

³⁰ Ibid.

Agitated and inebriated, Hussey fought with Favor, but Favor freed himself from Hussey's grasp. Hussey pulled his gun and fired two or three shots. One shot grazed Favor and struck Harrison Maffit in the chest. Maffit died instantly. Upon his arrival to Greenville, Georgia, General R. C. Drum, a federal investigator, expressed his surprise that authorities had taken no measures to solve the crime. No one knew the whereabouts of Favor or Hussey, but black residents wished to see Maffit's murder solved so that the honorable resident could receive justice. However, Drum never delivered justice or evidence, and the murderer allegedly fled from Georgia to Texas.³¹

On May 5, three unknown and disguised individuals attacked and shot David Hudson in the chest. Authorities in Mitchell County made no arrest for Hudson's attack, which took place at the freedman's home late in the night.³² In Lee County five days later, an unknown assailant attacked registered Republican Scrutchins with an axe because of his political affiliations. The attack left Scrutchins mortally wounded. Unsurprisingly, officials recorded no arrests.³³ During the night of May 11, Mitchell County resident Nelson Halloway and his family encountered a hail of bullets at their home. An estimated twenty assailants were responsible for the attack. Halloway's case followed as yet another suit that never saw justice served.³⁴

³¹ R. C. Drum to Prov. Governor Thomas H. Ruger, 6 May 1868. In Governor Thomas H. Ruger, Incoming Correspondence, Box 55.

³²Freedmen's Bureau, "Report of Outrages," No. 25, 5.

³³Ibid., No. 28, 6.

³⁴Ibid., No. 29, 6.

Peter Craghan shot and wounded Sallie Picket on May 19. Officials arrested Craghan for his attack. Sumter County officials placed bail at \$300.³⁵ On May 23, Dougherty County resident Robert Bray shot freedman Henry Clay Caswell in the face. Caswell issued a complaint to the Freedman's Bureau that his former employer W. C. Bray had not paid him for his services. Bray informed the freedman not to return to his plantation. However, an agent of the Freedmen's Bureau, requesting W. C. Bray's presence at the Albany Freedmen's Bureau office, sent Caswell back to the Bray Plantation. During the visit, Robert Bray, son of W. C. Bray, shot Caswell. Authorities arrested the younger Bray for the assault, but the case ended in a mistrial. Caswell, however, received a four-year term at the local penitentiary for signing an affidavit that stated W. C. Bray shot him.³⁶

On the next day in the same county, William Toler beat Lizzie Davis with a chair, breaking Davis's arm. Toler attacked Davis because of her supposedly disrespectful language. The authorities arrested Toler at the insistence of the Freedman's Bureau, but the case never went to trial. Following Toler's arrest, officials arrested Davis on charges of larceny for an offense that allegedly took place several months prior. Davis remained incarcerated for several months because she could not pay her bail, or court fees. Toler eventually dropped the charges against Davis under the agreement that she also drop the charges against him.³⁷

³⁵Ibid., No. 30, 6.

³⁶Ibid., No. 31, 6-7.

³⁷Ibid., No. 33, 7.

Late in the month of May, unknown perpetrators burned freedman Jack Bullard's home near Americus, killing Bullard's two children. The freedman's wife speculated that two unknown men ignited the fire; however, no person knew any details about the fire, or if they did, they withheld the knowledge. The white population viewed Bullard as a radical, and he struggled to find work in his hometown. Unemployment forced Bullard to travel to Albany, Georgia, in search of work, hence the reason he was not home at the time of the attack. No one was punished for the crime.³⁸ May's violence made such attacks normative. The cycle of oppression continued and increased as September neared.

On June 26, 1868, Governor-elect Rufus Bullock received a letter from R. C. Drum informing him that Congress had passed a law that allowed the state of Georgia back into the Union. This law ensured that Georgia politicians received representation in Congress. Drum's letter represented the end of Reconstruction in Georgia, although the measure would be short-lived. The ambush on the Camilla courthouse incited the return of Reconstruction measures.³⁹ Despite the law, violent attacks on blacks continued. The number of violent episodes lessened but still underscored the oppression in place throughout southwest Georgia. Georgia passed the Fourteenth Amendment, and Ruger

³⁸ U. McIntyre to Governor Rufus Bullock, July 23, 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence. Record Group 1-1-5, Box 56. Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, GA.

³⁹ R. C. Drum to Governor Rufus Bullock, 26 June 1868. Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

informed General George Meade of Georgia's reconstructed status. Georgia officially inaugurated Bullock as governor on July 22.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, the violence continued. The city of Thomasville, Georgia, requested troops in order to investigate the murder of the sheriff on July 18, which led to the arrest of H. B. Humphries.⁴¹ The freedman's trial for murdering the sheriff ended nearly as quickly as it had begun, although there was a strong lack of evidence. The courts found Humphries guilty, although cases had ended in acquittal when whites stood trial for violent acts against freedmen. Reconstruction era justice often presented itself as swift and righteous, with little attention paid to law and order, especially when blacks faced charges.⁴²

On Independence Day in 1868, a white man named Jack Smith shot an unknown freedman; Baker County officials made no arrest in this incident.⁴³ In Stewart County, on the tenth of July, John M. Cain shot freedman Abraham Holman, and officials took no actions.⁴⁴ William Austeen attacked freedman Anderson Tearson a week later in the same county. This incident resulted in no arrest, and Austeen remained in Stewart County.⁴⁵ On July 27, James Hall attacked Ann Hampton. Hampton had filed an affidavit with the Freedman's Bureau pertaining to an earlier incident, but her report

⁴⁰ Prov. Governor H. Ruger to General George Meade, July 21, 1868. Governor Thomas H. Ruger Incoming Correspondence, Box 55.

⁴¹ General Sibley to E. W. Sheibner, 18 July 1868. Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

⁴² E. W. Sheibner to Governor Rufus Bullock, 22 July 1868. Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

⁴³ Freedmen's Bureau, "Report of Outrages," No. 36, 8.

⁴⁴ Ibid., No. 37, 8.

⁴⁵ Ibid., No. 38, 8.

strongly contradicted one recorded by Hall. This sparked Hall to retaliate against Ann Hampton. Hall escaped punishment by fleeing to Baker County.⁴⁶ Sam Garner shot and severely beat Early County freedman Jeff Smith on the same day. Garner avoided arrest and never fled his home.⁴⁷

Freedman Humphries experienced swift Reconstruction justice in July, and the month also witnessed a freedman receiving life imprisonment for stealing candy, while whites continued getting away with murder. This oppressive trend continued. August of that year was another harsh month for former slaves in southwest Georgia. On the fifth, John Lumpkin shot Miles Grant in Schley County with no punishment.⁴⁸ On the same day, Lumpkin also shot John Singleterry, with the same judicial result.⁴⁹ In addition to the attacks in Schley County on August 5, 1868, Allen Dosier beat Cane Richardson with a club. Local authorities never charged Dosier for his attack in Clay County.⁵⁰

Beginning on August 10, assailants repeatedly attacked Dougherty County freedman Roland Caswell over the course of a week. Charles McFarland forced Caswell off McFarland's plantation. A few days following the initial incident, McFarland shot at Caswell as the freedman attempted to flee his home. Authorities never charged McFarland for the crime and he did not have to abandon his home to escape punishment.⁵¹ Less than a week later in neighboring Baker County, an attacker stabbed

⁴⁶Ibid., No. 39, 8.

⁴⁷Ibid., No. 40, 8-9.

⁴⁸Ibid., No. 41, 9.

⁴⁹Ibid., No. 43, 9.

⁵⁰Ibid., No. 42, 9.

⁵¹Ibid., No. 44, 9.

another freedman and thereafter fled the county.⁵² In Lee County on August 17, John Allen pistol-whipped his employee Wilson Carter for disrespectful language.⁵³ On the same day in the same county, two white men shot and wounded Jackson Smith without justice.⁵⁴

On August 21, John M. Cain shot and killed Dock Porter in Stewart County. Like Cain's July 10 assault, he remained in the county.⁵⁵ William Johnson, white, attacked freedman Charles Johnson of Quitman County and never appeared in court.⁵⁶ John Lumpkin of Schley County attacked another freedman on the twenty-fifth, targeting Edmund Frazer. Despite this being Lumpkin's third attack in the month of August, Schley County officials never arrested the perpetrator, and he remained in the county.⁵⁷ On the same day in Quitman County, a local doctor named Dr. Christian beat freedman Daniel Brown but avoided arrest.⁵⁸

In Baker County on August 26, 1868, J. W. Pierce shot Dock Randall in the chest. Local authorities arrested Pierce for his crime, but Pierce received an acquittal by Baker County officials.⁵⁹ The following day in Randolph County, Valentine Smith attacked

⁵²Ibid., No. 45, 9.

⁵³Ibid., No. 46, 9-10.

⁵⁴Ibid., No. 47, 10.

⁵⁵Ibid., No. 48, 10.

⁵⁶Ibid., No., 49, 10.

⁵⁷Ibid., No. 50, 10.

⁵⁸Ibid., No. 51, 10.

⁵⁹Ibid., No. 52, 10-11.

Allen Thornton with an axe. Local police failed to apprehend the assailant.⁶⁰ Less than a week later, A. Tryce struck two freedmen minors with a stick. Andrew Harris received blows to his head, while Washington Harrison received his on the hands and back. Tryce assaulted the minors for their alleged “disobedience of order.”⁶¹ At the end of the month of August, Benjamin and David James attacked two freedmen in Randolph County with axes without prosecution.⁶²

Four white men forced Calhoun County’s Harriet King from her home during the night of August 30, 1868. The assailants took King into the woods and ripped the clothing off the freedwoman’s body. Thereafter, the attackers laid her over a fallen tree and beat the woman with their boards and switches. King allegedly referred to one of her attacker’s children as a mulatto. For this statement, the four white men, reportedly Collier, McKraken, Hendrick, and George Wooten, attacked the woman under the shade of night in rural southwest Georgia.⁶³

August proved to be a trying month for the black residents of southwest Georgia and provided the platform upon which Camilla’s massacre rested. September’s attacks furthered the trend leading up to September 19, 1868. Allen Dosier assaulted another freedman in Clay County with an axe on September 1. Dosier fled Clay County for either Calhoun or Randolph County.⁶⁴ Two weeks later in Lee County, Edmund Johnson survived a knife attack while being physically assaulted. Johnson attempted to flee for

⁶⁰Ibid., No. 53, 11.

⁶¹Ibid., No. 54, 11.

⁶²Ibid., No. 56, 11-12.

⁶³Ibid., No. 55, 11.

⁶⁴Ibid., No. 57, 12.

safety, but Henry Calloway, Johnson's boss, shot at the freedman.⁶⁵ Four days later in Schley County, Marsh Thompson succumbed to a gunshot wound; officials never arrested Thompson's attacker.⁶⁶

The pattern continued in Americus, Georgia, on September 15, 1868. This event preceded Camilla's rally. Americus residents maintained a notable level of calmness and control. In addition, they primarily targeted white Republicans. The mob vowed safety for black attendants of the rally in exchange for the chance to capture the white Republicans, race traitors in their eyes.⁶⁷ However, the citizens of Camilla had a history of ignoring the finer points of the law.⁶⁸

These events demonstrated that during the year 1868, white citizens in southwest Georgia openly and repeatedly attacked freedmen without punishment. Smaller attacks attributed to an atmosphere that made events like the Camilla Massacre possible. These events acted as the catalyst for larger scale riots; the fact that local authorities failed to respond with swift aggression only compounded the volatile circumstances. Their actions instead resembled passive ignorance. The authorities refused to prosecute whites for attacking black people, but also, they failed to investigate specifics.

⁶⁵Ibid., No. 58, 12.

⁶⁶Ibid., No. 60, 12.

⁶⁷ Lee Formwalt, "The Camilla Massacre of 1868: Racial Violence as Political Propaganda," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 71 (Fall 1987): 403.

⁶⁸ Margaret Spence and Anna M. Fleming, *History of Mitchell County*, 100.

Chapter IV

“‘DAMN MY SOUL TO HELL:’ JAMES JOHNS AND THE CAMILLA MASSACRE”

The attacks on freedmen that took place in 1868 southwest Georgia demonstrated the heightened racial tensions leading up to the Camilla Massacre.¹ What happened at Camilla differed from previous altercations in its escalated level of violence and the sheer number of freedmen targeted. Instigators of the massacre launched the attacks at a political rally. Because the earlier most vicious attacks in 1868 took place under the night sky, the Republicans scheduled their September 19 rally at Camilla for the middle of the day. The relentless assaults indicated that Camilla’s massacre stemmed from more than just a political riot; rather, the assaults revealed a racially motivated political uprising.²

For nearly a week prior to the event, details about the rally circulated among citizens of southwest Georgia. A newspaper article in the local paper, flyers, and word-

¹ For a list of key people and places involved in the Camilla Massacre, see Appendix B (drawn from “Civil Unrest in Camilla” on the *Digital Library of Georgia*).

² Freedmen’s Bureau, “Report of Outrages Committed upon Citizens: State of Georgia from January 1st to November 15th 1868,” No. 61-87, 13-14. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence. Record Group 1-1-5, Box 57. Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, GA. A.B. Collins, Robert Morrison, Barney Morris, John Watson, Morris Orr, James Ingraham, Dock Polkill, John Scarborough, Jerry Davis, John Slaughter, Thomas Washington, and William Washington died during the Camilla Massacre at or near the courthouse. Daniel Shields, Joseph Parker, Isaac Adams’s daughter, Benjamin Sanders, Henry Robinson, Randolph Jourdan, Burrill Johnson, William Sandsey, Sam Dickenson, Wesley Chatman, William Dessau, Peter Hines, John Warren, William Outlaw, and Will Sorrell all received grave wounds during the massacre in Camilla, and several died following the event. This group participated in the rally but fled after the initial ambush.

of-mouth rumors reached freedmen and whites throughout the region.³ Blacks and whites approached the upcoming political rally differently. Freedmen and white Republicans both treated the rally as an opportunity to spread their ideals and also to campaign for local politicians who ran on the Republican Party ticket. White Southern Democrats saw the rally as an infringement upon tradition and an opportunity to humble the Republicans.

The campaign for the November 1868 election intensified racial relations in southwest Georgia. Local whites focused on restoring Democratic rule and Republicans (blacks, scalawags and carpetbaggers) remained focused on regaining the purged state legislation seats and continuing the political power they received during Reconstruction.⁴ Freedmen never accepted the right to vote as an end to their struggles. They intended to seek political office, a goal made even more difficult after the recent purge of blacks from the state legislature. The Democrats of Camilla viewed the purge as a commendable step toward reinstating white dominance in the South. Robert Warren, a white man from Mitchell County, informed freedman Sam Dickerson that Republican politician John Murphy should pull out of the political meeting. If Murphy refused to cancel the rally and insisted on delivering his speech in Camilla, whites reserved the right to shoot him dead because “this is our country and we intend to protect it or die.”⁵

³ Affidavit of John Murphy, 22 September 1868 and Affidavit of William Pierce, 25 September 1868. Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Record Group 1-1-5, Box 56. Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, GA.

⁴ Lee Formwalt, “The Camilla Massacre of 1868: Racial Violence as Political Propaganda,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 71 (Fall 1987): 401.

⁵ Affidavit of Washington Jones, 23 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

Indeed, Warren's neighbors supported this sentiment. Camilla's most influential citizen had similar inclinations. The city regarded Dr. William Tinsley as the most influential person in the county, as well as the richest. According to freedman John Davis, Tinsley tried to instigate a riot in the city on the day that Republicans marched from Albany to Camilla. Tinsley roused his men to anger and violence, spending his own money to supply whiskey and gunpowder.⁶

Republicans appealed to the black masses but failed to win all of them over; a majority of the local whites still disliked the political party. Southern whites viewed white Republicans as either northern aggressors or southern traitors: northern aggressors if the Republicans had moved down from the North after the war; traitors to their race and home if they were Southern Republicans. White southerners viewed blacks, of course, as the lowest of Republicans. The audience at the Republican Party rallies consisted mostly of blacks.⁷

Freedmen usually traveled by foot during Reconstruction and did the same for the trip to Camilla. Blacks expressed an interest in visiting from neighboring Dougherty County, the most populated county in southwest Georgia, to listen to Republicans William Pierce and John Murphy. Blacks left Albany on Friday September 18, 1868. They reached the Flagg and Fish plantation, owned by Edwin Flagg and William Fish. Here they stayed th night, in addition to some sleeping at an adjacent plantation owned by Varnum H. Flagg and Francis Putney.⁸ The next morning, Saturday September 19, a

⁶ Affidavit of John Davis, 26 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

⁷ Formwalt, "The Camilla Massacre," 402-403.

⁸ Ibid., 406.

number of freedmen met at China Grove Church between Albany and Camilla. Francis F. Putney, a Republican politician, facilitated the blacks' journey to Camilla, reassuring freedmen that no impending threat of violence existed. Putney urged the group, however, needed to travel in an inconspicuous manner so as not to arouse suspicion. Furthermore, Putney stated, "Now boys we will go down to Camilla, quietly and peaceably, make no disturbances and be perfectly civil and give these people no cause to trouble us."⁹ Staunch Republican John Murphy secured a musical band for the march to Camilla. Peter Hines, Howard Bunts, and William Outlaw were members of this band. Hines regularly attended Republican rallies during Reconstruction in southwest Georgia. Putney hired Lewis Davis to operate the wagon transporting the band. The band was a typical feature during Reconstruction political meetings.¹⁰

The freedmen left the church north of Camilla and proceeded toward the courthouse.¹¹ Though they had heard rumors of violence, the marchers carried on because violence never came to fruition at previous rallies. Conversely, white citizens of Mitchell County had different expectations for the day's activities.¹² For example, a

⁹ Affidavit of Squire Acre, 25 September 1868; Affidavit of Smith Bowen, 25 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

¹⁰ Affidavit of Peter Hines, 23 September 1868; Affidavit of Howard Bunts, 23 September 1868; Affidavit of William Outlaw, 23 September 1868; Affidavit of Lewis Davis, 25 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

¹¹ The politicians (F. F. Putney, William Pierce, John Murphy, and freedman Philip Joiner) would join the rest of the group later. There was also another local politician taking place in the march, see next note.

¹² This is not the same man as Peter Hines. Mr. Hines was a white citizen of Mitchell County. Peter Hines, elected coroner of Dougherty County in 1868, led the band. Edmund Drago, *Black Politicians & Reconstruction in Georgia: A Splendid Failure* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 178.

white resident named Hines informed freedman William Jones that “he would bet a good deal that Murphy would not speak in Camilla that day.”¹³

A unanimous estimate of the number of people marching on September 19, 1868 does not exist. Members of the crowd described the number of Republicans in different ways. Ishmael Lonon estimated the size of the crowd at approximately seventy-five, while John Davis believed the Republicans to have over one hundred and fifty supporters. Davis Sneed believed the group to be nearly three hundred strong. However, the crowd grew as the marchers neared their destination. Along the way, a white man on horseback met the freedmen. His name was James Johns.¹⁴

The freedmen witnessed Johns riding on his horse and carrying his loaded double barrel shotgun with him.¹⁵ Johns inquired whether the large group had seen or heard of Dr. Jenkins. While working on Johns’s employer’s plantation, a tree or limb had fallen on a black coworker, and he commenced looking for the doctor. Johns asked the marchers to alert the doctor of the situation should they meet him along the way. He then showed interest in the destination of the large crowd. The marchers informed Johns of

¹³ Affidavit of William Jones, 28 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

¹⁴ Affidavit of Ishmael Lonon, 27 September 1868; Affidavit of John Davis, 26 September 1868; Affidavit of Davis Sneed, 25 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56. James Johns in the same character responsible for the voter intimidation the previous April, page 51.

¹⁵ James Johns has been typically portrayed as a drunk, especially in regards to his role in the massacre. However, most records on the initial encounter between blacks and Johns do not portray him as being intoxicated. In addition, with the educated John Murphy and William Pierce estimating that they met up with the marchers four or five miles from Camilla, rather than the usually believed two or three miles, as represented in most accounts of the Camilla Massacre, this would give Johns more time to get drunk upon his return to Camilla, which would better explain his actions in town. In addition Goliath Kendrick’s affidavit suggested that Johns was a watch repairer by trade. Assuming that one could make a living only on repairing watches, which was probable, then his entire setup for encountering the freedmen was a lie. The fact that Jimmy Johns and the freedmen could have met earlier, along with Dr. Tinsley’s statement on personally purchasing alcohol and gunpowder, could have added to a violent mixture, especially with Johns reputation as the town drunk. In addition to his actions in April, Johns appears to be the instigator of other problems once he was liquored up.

their plans to attend the Republican speech at the Camilla courthouse. The news appeared to surprise Johns, although witnesses claimed to have overheard him planning the attack that occurred later that day.¹⁶

At this time, Jimmy Johns (another alias for James Johns) changed his approach to the freedmen. Johns warned the blacks not to enter the city. He also advised them to abandon the band if they felt compelled to proceed toward town. Johns expressed that he was the courier of the road that led to Camilla and that the blacks should not dare travel any further with the music playing: “But you can go in, just as you damn please you’ll get hurt anyhow.” The mysterious James Johns then traveled back to Camilla riding on his horse, still carrying his double barrel shotgun.¹⁷

Freedmen then encountered a buggy carrying white men, who also warned them not to enter Camilla.¹⁸ Around five miles from the city, John Murphy, William Pierce, Philip Joiner, and F. F. Putney joined the others.¹⁹ The Republicans, now finally reunited, marched toward their destination.

Two miles from the courthouse, Mitchell County’s sheriff, Mumford Poore, met the Republicans. Poore and his constituents agreed that they wanted to prevent the

¹⁶ Affidavit of William Outlaw, 23 September 1868; Affidavit of Daniel Howard, 25 September 1868; Affidavit of Squire Acre, 25 September 1868; Affidavit of Smith Bowen, 25 September 1868; Affidavit of Davis Sneed, 25 September 1868; Affidavit of Ishmael Lonon, 27 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

¹⁷ Affidavit of William Outlaw, 23 September 1868; Affidavit of Daniel Howard, 25 September 1868; Affidavit of Squire Acre, 25 September 1868; Affidavit of Smith Bowen, 25 September 1868; Affidavit of Davis Sneed, 25 September 1868; Affidavit of Ishmael Lonon, 27 September 1868. Quote in Affidavit of Daniel Howard, 25 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

¹⁸ Affidavit of Howard Bunts, 23 September 1868; Affidavit of Davis Sneed, 25 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

¹⁹ John Murphy estimated the meeting, between himself and the larger crowd at around four miles from town. William Pierce estimated the same meeting at five or six miles from Camilla.

marchers from entering the city. Meanwhile, a number of freedmen carried weapons with them as they walked with the Republican politicians. Carrying weapons was common at the time. Estimates suggest that between 25-50% of the blacks possessed guns, but most had little or no ammunition. Despite the uncertainty about the number of weapons, the sheriff suggested that the crowd attempting to enter the county seat acted as a military unit with the sole objective of taking over the city. Poore insinuated that they must change the venue for the event.²⁰ John Murphy and the sheriff agreed and made plans to relocate the speech. The Republicans decided that Dr. H. C. Dasher's plantation, about a mile outside of town, marked the best location for the rally. Mixed reactions spread among the freedmen; some supported the change, while others determined to meet at the courthouse. The politicians spoke with Dasher about allowing the rally to take place on his land. After a long debate, Dasher insisted that the only place available for the massive political speech needed to be the courthouse in town.²¹

With this decision, Murphy and Pierce sent a delegate ahead to inform the sheriff of Dasher's unwillingness to relocate the rally.²² The freedman elected to transmit the

²⁰ Affidavit of Ishmael Lonon, 27 September 1868; Affidavit of Davis Sneed, 25 September 1868; Affidavit of Howard Bunts, 23 September 1868; Affidavit of F. F. Putney, 22 September 1868; Affidavit of John Murphy, 22 September 1868; Affidavit of William Outlaw, 23 September 1868; Affidavit of Philip Joiner, 23 September 1868; Affidavit of William Pierce, 25 September 1868; Affidavit of Daniel Howard, 25 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

²¹ Affidavit of Ishmael Lonon, 27 September 1868; Affidavit of Davis Sneed, 25 September 1868; Affidavit of Howard Bunts, 23 September 1868; Affidavit of F. F. Putney, 22 September 1868; Affidavit of John Murphy, 22 September 1868; Affidavit of William Outlaw, 23 September 1868; Affidavit of Philip Joiner, 23 September 1868; Affidavit of William Pierce, 25 September 1868; Affidavit of Daniel Howard, 25 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

²² Dr. Dasher lived a mile outside Camilla. With the social network that was in place at the time, which carried news and rumors throughout Mitchell and Dougherty Counties, it would be deemed nearly impossible for Dasher not to have known about the preparations among whites to attack the marchers. Possibly, he ignored the request because he feared the white posse would attack the blacks on his land, and perhaps himself. Or, maybe the whites promised him safety in return for not warning the crowd of Republicans, because no affidavit stated that Dasher warned the crowd not to proceed to Camilla.

message to the city officials, however, never left the marchers because Mumford Poore approached the crowd. The sheriff informed Murphy and Pierce that he had been unable to subdue the citizens of Camilla. Poore insisted that the courthouse would be a good place for the meeting, as long as the freedmen surrendered their weapons before entering the city. Murphy stated that he held no responsibility for the weapons carried by blacks and that the Republicans had the right to hold their meeting. Additionally, Murphy noted that it was the sheriff's job to ensure that the politicians had access to a safe place to conduct their business. Poore agreed that it was his job but did not know how to accomplish the task. Thereafter, the sheriff returned to town.²³

Once again, the Republicans continued toward the courthouse. Pierce and Murphy again reminded the crowd to be calm and to refrain from inciting trouble. Furthermore, Murphy warned the freedmen that under no circumstances should they fire their weapons. Entering Camilla from the north situated the Republicans on the back side of the courthouse.²⁴ Putney suggested that the Republicans "scatter out" to avoid the appearance of an armed convoy. He and Pierce took the lead at a distance of two hundred yards in front of the nearest freedmen. Pierce and Putney proceeded down the eastern side of the courthouse, before turning west.²⁵

²³ Affidavit of Ishmael Lonon, 27 September 1868; Affidavit of Davis Sneed, 25 September 1868; Affidavit of Howard Bunts, 23 September 1868; Affidavit of F. F. Putney, 22 September 1868; Affidavit of John Murphy, 22 September 1868; Affidavit of William Outlaw, 23 September 1868; Affidavit of Philip Joiner, 23 September 1868; Affidavit of William Pierce, 25 September 1868; Affidavit of Daniel Howard, 25 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

²⁴ William Pierce and F. F. Putney were the first to enter the town square.

²⁵ Affidavit of Lochran Hunter, 28 September 1868; Affidavit of John Murphy, 22 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

Putney and Pierce dismounted from their buggy in front of the courthouse. The building's doors were on the south side of the building. The wagon carrying the band followed the two politicians. James Johns advanced toward the band as they reached a one hundred yard distance from the courthouse. Sam Dickerson, a freedman from Camilla who had overheard Robert Warren's plan to keep Murphy from speaking, approached Johns on the square. Dickerson pleaded with the inebriated watch repairer: "Mr. Johns you know me, we do not mean any harm."²⁶

Dickerson's effort proved unsuccessful. Johns turned his attention toward the band and warned, "If you don't stop that music, damn my soul to hell if I don't shoot you."²⁷ The drunken white man's words meant nothing because as soon as the band quit playing, he fired his shotgun into the wagon. James Johns, the one who rode out and met the blacks before they entered town, initiated the encounter later known as the Camilla Massacre.²⁸

During this altercation between Johns and the freedmen, Pierce and Putney noticed that a crowd of white Camilla residents formed a defensive line along the western portion of the town square. Also, a similarly-sized group of men aligned along the southern side of the square. The two politicians had previously dismounted their buggy and stood in front of the courthouse, which altered their perception.²⁹

²⁶ Affidavit of William Pierce, 25 September 1868; Affidavit of Goliath Kendrick, 23 September 1868; Affidavit of George Thomas, Peter Massey, Gabe Jenkins, Harrison Clements, and Henry Byrd, 26 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

²⁷ Affidavit of Davis Sneed, 25 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Affidavit of William Pierce, 25 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

Immediately following Johns's shots into the bandwagon, the line from the west fired an estimated fifty rounds toward the blacks. At the same time, members of the southern line began firing on the freedmen. With both sides shooting at the group, Pierce and Putney realized that some of the shooters had altered their firing direction. Pierce and Putney found themselves as targets. They moved toward the freedmen in an attempt to flee town and briefly reunited with Murphy and Joiner. Reports suggested that the citizens would empty one gun, while others inside the stores distributed loaded guns to maximize the number of rounds fired upon the Republicans.³⁰

In an attempt to flee Camilla, the four politicians organized a small defensive guard of armed blacks to delay the whites who wanted to continue the chase.³¹ Unfortunately, the politicians (and perhaps the freedmen as well) did not anticipate the whites' resolute willingness to kill. Only seven armed blacks assembled on the north side of town, intent on firing on the whites. This group had no contingency ammunition to reload after the first shots. The armed group disbanded so that each man had a better chance of saving himself.³² Blacks cleared the town square within the span of a few minutes following the ambush. A chase ensued, resulting in much of the massacre's

³⁰ Affidavit of Plenty Arnold, 25 September 1868; Affidavit of William Pierce, 25 September 1868; Affidavit of Davis Sneed, 25 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

³¹ It is important to note that once the whites began firing on the blacks and their Republican leaders that reports support the fact that freedmen returned fire. Affidavit of Lewis Smith, 24 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

³² Affidavit of John Murphy, 22 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

carnage. Freedmen took many different routes to flee the ambush. The gun battle, initiated by Jimmy Johns' opening shot, was primarily a one-sided affair.³³

Freedman Plenty Arnold escaped town on a mule, but four whites on horseback pursued him. Because of his mule's slow pace, he ditched the animal near China Grove Church and hid in a cornfield. The men on horseback focused more intently on trailing John Murphy and Philip Joiner—a resolve that saved Arnold's life.³⁴ Joiner and Murphy escaped the scene in Murphy's buggy. Joiner noted that he could see horses following them; smoke and bullets filled the air during their pursuit. Around nine miles north of the city, both politicians fled from the buggy. Joiner sought refuge in a field, while Murphy found shelter in a house on the other side of the road. Camilla residents tracked Murphy down at the house and forced him to come out; they struck the politician in the head with a gun, wounding the Republican. The assailants did not demand any information from Murphy and instead rounded up their horses and headed back to Camilla. Murphy and Joiner rejoined each other after eight miles of traveling solo.³⁵

William Jones, Lochran Hunter, Smith Bowen, and Lewis Smith eluded the citizens by escaping through the woods north of town.³⁶ Squire Acre suffered a gunshot wound in the shoulder while on the town square but still managed to find a mule. He fled on the mule until he realized that men had followed him. Acre found himself between

³³ Affidavit of Washington Jones, 23 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

³⁴ Affidavit of Plenty Arnold, 25 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

³⁵ Affidavit of Philip Joiner, 23 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

³⁶ Affidavit of William Jones, 28 September 1868; Affidavit of Lochran Hunter, 28 September 1868; Affidavit of Smith Bowen, 25 September 1868; Affidavit of Lewis Smith, 24 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

white pursuers and the politicians. Like Arnold, Acre jumped off of his mule, while the whites kept after Murphy and Joiner.³⁷ Ishmael Lonon fled the massacre on horseback, which allowed him to be ahead of the politicians. Lonon corroborated that whites overtook Murphy and Joiner's buggy, but the freedman did not return to help them, had Lonon returned he probably would have been killed.³⁸

Daniel Howard attempted to flee in a different fashion. Howard stayed on the square, while white citizens chased after the freedmen. When the opportunity presented itself, Howard unsuccessfully attempted to escape into the woods. The freedman noted that whites killed all of the black people who they came across during the search for freedmen: "The whites would, lean over and placing their guns and pistols almost on the freedmen, shoot them dead." White citizens of Camilla forced Howard to travel along with the whites to collect wounded individuals and to bury the dead they encountered.³⁹ Howard also reported overhearing whites discussing their intentions of killing blacks, especially if their plan of disarming the freedmen outside of town materialized. The schemers reportedly said, "if the G-d d-d niggers, had only come without arms, as we tried to have them, we could have surrounded them [and] killed the last d-d one of them."⁴⁰

³⁷ Affidavit of Squire Acre, 25 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

³⁸ Affidavit of Ishmael Lonon, 27 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

³⁹ There are no records of where the bodies of those killed in Camilla during the riot were buried. In fact, even the heralded James Johns is not listed as a person buried within a cemetery in the city.

⁴⁰ Affidavit of Daniel Howard, 25 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

Lewis Davis also fled Camilla by way of the woods. Davis believed that he ran around three miles, where he sought safety by climbing a tree. Around six in the evening, the freedman attempted to make his way home. However, four white men met him as he crossed the road. One of these men hit Davis on the head with a gun, but he escaped to a local swamp, where he hid until the next day. On Sunday, the freedman found the courage to return home.⁴¹

The massacre ended differently for each member of the band who led the politicians into Camilla. An unnamed member of this band lost his life during the firing on the square. Peter Hines escaped by way of a cotton field and through a swamp, before fleeing north to Albany in the woods.⁴² Howard Bunts noted that after Johns began firing on the band, shots seemed to ring from all sides of the wagon. Bunts “was hit in the arm, and in the head,” then passed out after falling from the bandwagon. Upon regaining consciousness, Bunts fled Camilla via a swamp.⁴³ William Outlaw, who played percussions, used his own drum as a shield from Johns’s bullets. The musician received wounds in both the chest and leg and escaped to Albany on Sunday at four in the afternoon.⁴⁴

During the search for freedmen, the white participants continued their ruthless actions. Whites murdered a freedman named Daniel Childs in his bed for simply

⁴¹ Affidavit of Lewis Davis, 25 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

⁴² Affidavit of Peter Hines, 23 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

⁴³ Affidavit of Howard Bunts, 23 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

⁴⁴ Affidavit of William Outlaw, 23 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

attending the rally. Others severely beat another black man known as Wilson “for the same reason.”⁴⁵ On Sunday morning, a woman, Maria Jones, who lived near the China Grove church, searched for her son. She first visited her neighbor’s home because he too had been missing since Saturday. On her way there, she heard dogs barking and guns firing. Her neighbor eventually emerged from the woods, the same forest where Jones heard the noises. The neighbor revealed that white men “were running the freedmen with hounds and shooting them as they overtook them.” Jones’s neighbor fled China Grove toward the Flint River, and as of October 5, 1868, Maria Jones never saw her neighbor again.⁴⁶

In December 1868, Philip Joiner and Robert Crumley co-wrote a letter to Congress requesting additional assistance for southwest Georgia. During the year, the freedmen of this region “have been afflicted with grievances as a people, unprecedented in this country, simply because they have attempted to exercise their political rights as American citizens.”⁴⁷ Joiner and Crumley outlined the harsh lives forced upon freedmen in their region following emancipation, including the gruesome attack on “a little colored girl” at the hands of John Gaines the night of the Camilla riot. Gaines attacked this girl, “about 12 years old, and cut her severely with a knife over the back of the head and neck

⁴⁵ Affidavit of John Davis, 26 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

⁴⁶ Affidavit of Maria Jones, 5 October 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

⁴⁷ “Memorial of the Colored Men of the Second Congressional District of Georgia, Setting Forth Their Grievances, and Asking Protection,” Philip Joiner and Robert Crumley to Congress, December 4, 1868. House Committee on Reconstruction, *The Condition of Affairs in Georgia*, 40th Congress, third session, 1869, H. Misc. Doc. 52, 91-98; Lee Formwalt, “Petitioning Congress for Protection: A Black View of Reconstruction at the Local Level” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* LXXIII (Summer 1989), 309. See “Issac Adam’s Daughter,” “Report of Outrages Committed upon Citizens: State of Georgia from January 1st to November 15th 1868,” No. 75, 13. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence. Record Group 1-1-5, Box 57. Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, GA.

and on the arm, and then deliberately took her and split each finger from its end to the centre of the hand, and then cut her several time across the hand.” Gaines’s attack on the minor exemplified the treatment of blacks in southwest Georgia: “all this simply because she had gone to Camilla with her aunt on that day to hear a republican speech. Gaines publically boasts over this act of ‘chivalry’ and receives the plaudits of the public.”⁴⁸

Following a funeral on John Cutliff’s plantation in Camilla, an armed group of between ten and twenty white men confronted the farm owner about the whereabouts of a “G-d d-d nigger Chestly Hooper.” Cutliff chided the men for their actions, which he said damaged the place they called home. Southwest Georgia had not witnessed firsthand the devastation of the Civil War, but with the malicious intent of Hooper’s pursuers, however, Cutliff believed that massively murdering freedmen would surely bring federal soldiers flooding into the area. The mounted men agreed with Cutliff but stated that if they found Chestly Hooper, they would kill him.⁴⁹

Jackson O’Brien was in the Camilla area following the massacre. The freedman located four dead blacks on the plantation of Dr. Dasher, the place where the Republicans sought to relocate the speech. O’Brien also observed a group of white men plotting to remove the wounded and deceased from that day’s incident. He left Dasher’s property and reported to town, where he heard the sounds of someone being whipped.⁵⁰ O’Brien arrived at his residential quarters on Dr. Tinsley’s plantation. All of the freedmen gathered in their quarters on Monday night at 9:30 p.m. A group of white men showed

⁴⁸ Ibid., 318.

⁴⁹ Affidavit of John Bird, 21 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

⁵⁰ Affidavit of Jackson O’Brien, 23 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

up and startled them. A number of these freedmen left their homes in search of safety. O'Brien did not look back as he left the scene. The next morning, he encountered seven white men. They inquired about the freedman's destination and then accused him of being on his way to O. H. Howard's office.⁵¹ O'Brien denied the allegations, which earned him a strike to the head with a gun. Compared to being shot, the blow to the head was a small victory.⁵²

John Murphy concluded that the townspeople misinterpreted the Republicans' intentions. According to Murphy, Camilla residents believed that the demonstrators arrived at the city with the intent to cause harm. Instead of ascertaining the facts, the white citizens of Camilla plotted their attack before the group arrived. Murphy noted that the gravity of the attack, particularly the chase after blacks and politicians outside of town, demonstrated a lack of leadership and remained unforgivable.⁵³ Not one of the organizers of the event believed that the Camilla rally would materialize in such a manner. Pierce noted that if he had believed any of the rumors surrounding this rally, he would have sacrificed his honor and credibility by canceling the event. Furthermore, Murphy believed that the freedmen who were "murdered, butchered, in the most cruel and barbarous way," for attending the rally, received unjust punishments.⁵⁴

⁵¹ O. H. Howard was the Freedmen's Bureau Sub-Assistant Commissioner for southwest Georgia. His office was located in Albany, Georgia. He will be discussed more in depth later in the study.

⁵² Affidavit of Jackson O'Brien, 23 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

⁵³ Affidavit of John Murphy, 22 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

⁵⁴ Affidavit of William P. Pierce, 25 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

Chapter V

“‘ALMOST TOO TERRIBLE TO BELIEVE’: THE FALLOUT FROM THE CAMILLA MASSACRE”

O. H. Howard, the Sub-Assistant Commissioner for the Freedmen’s Bureau in southwest Georgia, maintained his office in Albany. Black victims made their way to the Freedmen’s Bureau following the Camilla Massacre to have their version of events recorded. Camilla exacerbated the demands of Howard’s job in the days following the event because he needed both to investigate the incident and to maintain order among the citizens of the area.

Howard feared that the massacre in Camilla, Georgia, would not be an isolated incident. He needed the assistance of armed soldiers in order to maintain law and order. The head of the local Freedmen’s Bureau office felt that only he could prevent a race war among the citizens of southwest Georgia. However, his main concern remained his family because he knew how Camilla locals retaliated against white politicians. Democrats typically showed little restraint when presented with an opportunity to harm a Northern race traitor such as Howard; they had attempted a similar retribution in Camilla.¹

¹ O. H. Howard to Colonel John Randolph Lewis, 20 September 1868. In “Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Georgia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1870,” National Archives Microfilm Publication M798, Roll 22.

Howard sent local physician and Freedmen's Bureau agent Christian Raushenberg to attend to the wounded in Camilla.² Meanwhile, hundreds of freedmen poured into the Freedmen's Bureau office in Albany.³ Howard consoled the scared, calmed the angry, and issued promises to them all. Though his promises were heartfelt, Howard could not ensure their implementation. In fact, Howard knew that he could not fulfill the majority of his promises. The commissioner understood, however, that once the freedmen lost faith in him, all their hopes would dissipate.⁴ In a telegram addressed to M. Frank Gallagher, an adjutant for Caleb Sibley, on September 21, 1868, Howard threatened to resign from his post unless he received more federal troops.⁵

On the night of September 20, 1868, Howard reported his beliefs as to what occurred in Camilla the previous day.⁶ He noted that James Johns had indeed warned the blacks not to enter the town and that the citizens of Camilla did not want the speakings to

² O. H. Howard to Colonel John Randolph Lewis, 20 September 1868. In "Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Georgia," M798, Roll 22.

³ According to the affidavit of Richard Hobbs, 27 September 1868 (Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56. Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, GA.) on the night of the Camilla Massacre, a preacher, Robert Crumley, at the "colored" Methodist church, warned his congregation that they should not make the trip to Camilla without at least 150 people. Also, marchers should not travel without arms and plenty of ammunition. Hobbs continued that the preacher proposed a meeting for the next morning at eight. If the need arose, the congregation would travel to Camilla to "burn the Earth about the place." This affidavit was recorded by the mayor of Albany, and not O. H. Howard, and Richard Hobbs obviously a white man, who may have been bitter about all of the racial attention being paid to his community. Perhaps Crumley's sermon was overheard by Hobbs and Shade Atkinson, which would be cause for alarm considering the recent events. If this be the case, what were Hobbs and Atkinson doing outside of the colored Methodist church, other than spying, and why did they not go O. H. Howard to file a report?

⁴ O. H. Howard to Colonel John Randolph Lewis, 20 September 1868. (Different letter from the previous mentioned). In "Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Georgia," M798, Roll 22.

⁵ O. H. Howard to M. Frank Gallagher, 21 September 1868. In "Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Georgia," M798, Roll 22.

⁶ Rather than repeat the entire report, I will focus mainly on discrepancies between my reformulation and his report.

take place. The marchers, he continued, ignored the warnings and proceeded toward town. The Republicans encountered Sheriff Mumford Poore, who attempted to facilitate a change of venue. However, the Republicans later arrived on the square despite two attempts by the officer to keep them from entering town.⁷

James Johns, or Jemmy John as Howard referred to him, fired the first shot. The Freedmen's Bureau agent noted that the inebriated instigator, heralded by his fellow whites, met his end in the crossfire.⁸ The watch repairman fell "over his gun to the ground in a heap." White Camilla citizens carried mortally wounded whites into their homes rather than leave them out in the open, a practice denied for dead blacks.⁹

Howard notably reported that a white man named James W. Armstrong, Jr., a member of the Young Men's Democratic Club, made a trip into Camilla days before the ambush. Howard believed that Armstrong's sole purpose for the visit was to provoke the citizens into action, as, along with most citizens in the town, he vehemently opposed the Republican speakings. Howard further explained that the guns used in Camilla originated from Rust, Johnson & Co. in Albany; conspirators had transported the guns south for the massacre.¹⁰

Armstrong denied Howard's claim. He did work for the South Western Railroad, but he cited business as his reason for visiting the small town. The devout follower of politics claimed that he had no idea "that there was to be a political meeting of the

⁷ Report of O. H. Howard, 19 September 1868. In "Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Georgia," M798, Roll 22. (Hereafter cited as "Report of O. H. Howard.")

⁸ Howard's report was written the night of the Camilla Massacre, prior to many of his affidavits being recorded. Howard recreates the massacre from the perspective of Ishmael Lonnon, even though the Freedmen's Bureau agent did not record Ishmael Lonnon's affidavit until 27 September 1868.

⁹ Report of O. H. Howard, 19 September 1868.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Radicals or any other party there on Saturday or any other day.” Armstrong disingenuously claimed that he had no impression about the racial conflict in the area, especially the major impending developments.¹¹ Of course, a person affiliated with the Young Men’s Democratic Club should have been more aware of political events happening in surrounding areas. Armstrong made no mention of the allegations that held him responsible for the arms used in the riot. Additionally, he waited nearly a week following Howard’s report before responding with a statement of his own.¹²

Howard traveled to Atlanta shortly after the massacre. He asked Dr. Christian Raushenberg to investigate and supply an unbiased account of the riot. Raushenberg concluded that the entire town of Camilla conspired to prevent Republicans from delivering speeches on the town square. No reason existed to believe that the group of freedmen acted as an armed unit, even though roughly half carried guns and others carried sticks. The Republican politicians never handed down instructions for the freedmen to carry arms. The freedmen only exercised their right to bear arms for protection.¹³

Poore’s attempt to disarm the freedmen, according to Rashenberg, demonstrated neither an act of fear nor premeditation. The sheriff’s actions did not spark the riot but instead intensified the violence toward Republicans, limiting the threat to local whites.

¹¹ Affidavit of James W. Armstrong Jr., 26 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

¹² In all fairness, Armstrong was listed as being a resident of Macon, Georgia, and perhaps this was the earliest that the businessman could get south. However, allegations made by O. H. Howard would have sparked an urgency to have a statement recorded.

¹³ Christian Rashenberg to O. H. Howard, 28 September 1868. On “Civil Unrest in Camilla, Georgia, 1868: Reconstruction, Republicanism, and Race,” *Digital Library of Georgia*, accessed 8 September 2010.

Pierce and Murphy should have abandoned the speakings when Poore sought to disarm the group, attempting to coerce the massive group onto the square unarmed. Canceling the meeting equaled political suicide, but in the wake of the massacre, this may have been the correct choice for the politicians.¹⁴

Raushenberg concurred that James Johns fired the first shot but wavered on whether Johns fired at the band. Johns's reputation as the town drunk also surfaced in the report of the Freedmen's Bureau agent. With his past struggles with alcohol and his intoxication at the time of the shooting, Poore should have removed Johns from the center of town. Instead, the sheriff let him mingle with other irate citizens and allowed him to remain part of his armed posse. The report also noted that the pursuit of fleeing freedmen from Camilla "was not required for the preservation of peace and order."¹⁵

Raushenberg created the report for his friend O. H. Howard as a private act.¹⁶ Unfortunately, the synopsis never reached Howard in Atlanta. Rumors circulated that a newspaper had published his account. If true, the doctor's reputation would suffer irreparable damage. He requested the dispatch of troops for protection if indeed the letter or portions of it appeared in the media. Raushenberg, after all, blamed the whites, mostly those from Camilla, for the massacre.¹⁷

¹⁴ Christian Raushenberg to O. H. Howard, 28 September 1868. "Civil Unrest in Camilla, Georgia, 1868: Reconstruction, Republicanism, and Race," *Digital Library of Georgia*, accessed 8 September 2010.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Christian Raushenberg to John Randolph Lewis, 1 October 1868. "Civil Unrest in Camilla, Georgia, 1868: Reconstruction, Republicanism, and Race," *Digital Library of Georgia*, accessed 8 September 2010.

While the Freedmen's Bureau conducted the majority of the investigation into the Camilla Massacre, others also searched for the truth. General George Meade of the U.S. Army dispatched Captain William Mills to investigate.¹⁸ Mills speculated that the group of between 200 to 300 freedmen did not intend to cause problems in the town. They only wanted to attend a Republican speech. Mills's conclusions were similar to those of Raushenberg, but the Army investigator dug deeper into the background of Johns. Residents of Camilla listed him as nothing more than a troublemaker with a drinking problem. When the Republicans reached the square, Johns's anger and alcohol combined to deadly effect. Mills called Poore's failure to remove Jimmy Johns from the square a clear lack of judgment and duty.¹⁹

The U. S. Army never dispatched troops to Camilla following the massacre.²⁰ In order for the Army to offer assistance in preserving the peace, the petitioners needed to follow certain procedures. Accordingly, the local sheriff had to make the request. Officials would then send facts to the office of the President of the United States. In this case, Andrew Johnson held responsibility to dispatch troops. Until then, the Army assumed that local authorities maintained the ability to efficiently put down riots and disturbances in their local precincts. Meade kept soldiers on standby in anticipation of deployment orders, but he never received them.²¹

¹⁸ George Meade to Ulysses S. Grant, 3 October 1868. "Civil Unrest in Camilla, Georgia, 1868: Reconstruction, Republicanism, and Race," *Digital Library of Georgia*, accessed 8 September 2010.

¹⁹ William Mills to McPherson Barracks, 23 September 1868. "Civil Unrest in Camilla, Georgia, 1868: Reconstruction, Republicanism, and Race," *Digital Library of Georgia*, accessed 8 September 2010.

²⁰ George Meade to Ulysses S. Grant, 3 October 1868. "Civil Unrest in Camilla, Georgia, 1868: Reconstruction, Republicanism, and Race," *Digital Library of Georgia*, accessed 8 September 2010.

²¹ George Meade to Rufus Bullock, 2 October 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

In Camilla, Sheriff Mumford Poore held the responsibility for submitting the request for assistance.²² At 10:30 in the morning on September 19, 1868, Poore received word that blacks neared town around five miles away. The sheriff received a letter addressed to the residents of Camilla that informed them of the blacks' "evil intentions" upon entering their town.²³ Poore admitted that he could not remember if the letter, sent by a black Democrat from Albany, named Crawford Broadnax, stated that the Republicans would to be traveling with or without weapons. Near the time that the sheriff received the letter, he claimed that the locals received warning that armed blacks headed straight for their hometown.²⁴

Poore stated that the citizens independently delegated individuals to accompany the sheriff as he conversed with the Republican crowd. The posse questioned them about their intentions and informed them that their military-like procession broke the law. Poore asked the politicians why they performed acts of war at a time of peace; he told them that they "were responsible for the actions of those armed men." Murphy and Pierce declared that they held no such liability for the freedmen's weapons, since carrying weapons was a habitual, legal practice. The politicians informed Poore of their intentions to continue to Camilla for a peaceful assembly.²⁵

²² All previous accounts, used in this chapter (and the previous chapter), of Poore used have been based on others' recollection of events. The following is the reformulation based on the sheriff's affidavit.

²³ Later in the affidavit, Poore changed his remarks to say Crawford Broadnax's letter arrived in Baker County, then forwarded to Camilla. This change will be addressed later.

²⁴ Affidavit of Mumford S. Poore, 23 September 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

²⁵ Ibid.

The sheriff told the politicians that the citizens of Camilla would allow the speakings to take place if the freedmen left their guns outside of town. Murphy believed the best scenario would include a change of venue to Dr. Dasher's plantation. Poore claimed that Pierce rejected the suggestion to relocate the rally and proceeded to the courthouse. If the procession continued, the sheriff argued, freedmen would be responsible for the consequences. The procession continued, and the sheriff went ahead to round up the Camilla men, who armed themselves to protect their city.²⁶

The crowd entered town with music blaring from the bandwagon. Marchers followed the wagon, according to the sheriff, in a manner that resembled an army entering his town. Poore positioned himself on the west side of the square as the freedmen and politicians passed in front of him and his posse. As James Johns confronted the procession, the sheriff claimed the noisy courthouse prevented him from hearing the conversation. Fearing that tensions might escalate, Poore attempted to restrain Johns. However, as Johns turned away from the band, he accidentally discharged his weapon into the ground, "twelve feet from him and not in a direction to hit anyone."²⁷

In return, freedmen opened fire at Johns and in the general direction of an "unarmed crowd." Johns turned toward the band and fired again. The unarmed citizens entered a "house where arms could be got" as individuals fired guns all over the town square. Within a couple of minutes, freedmen cleared the courthouse square, and the Republican leaders, along with black activists, appeared to flee the town; instead, they waited in the woods outside of Camilla. After a short time, some citizens pursued the

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

“fugitives,” but Poore gave orders to not kill the blacks. He claimed that those searching for blacks took no hounds or any other type of dogs. The sheriff concluded that no white person brought any weapons into the town and that no citizen made plans to disrupt the proceedings of September 19, 1868.²⁸

Three men witnessed Poore’s affidavit: M. Cameron, William Byrd, and Joseph Pearce, all of whom endorsed his statement. Byrd ended the affidavit with the remark that, “I am personally acquainted with M. S. Poore and [Joseph] Pearce they are reliable and responsible citizens Poore as Sheriff.”²⁹ This same William Byrd had a reputation for being “hostile to Agent[s] of the Bureau and freedmen.” The day of the massacre, Byrd “cursed the Congress and all Government officials as a d – d pack of traitors.”³⁰

With the sheriff obviously involved with the riot, Meade would never receive a request for the dispatch of soldiers to the city to preserve order, especially since local whites caused most of the chaos. He concluded—against Poore’s statement—that the sheriff was responsible for the event at the courthouse, but also for the pursuit of blacks who fled the ambush. Poore never attempted to keep the citizens in Camilla; instead he allowed them to chase down the Republicans. Meade believed that charges should be brought and further investigations undertaken of “all guilty parties whether Sheriff-Coroner or citizens.”³¹

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Poore altered his affidavit. He changed information on the letter, originally noted as addressed to the city of Camilla. According to Poore, now swore that a Mr. Livingston of Newton, Georgia, in Baker County received the letter. Livingston then sent the letter to the sheriff of Mitchell County. Ibid.

³⁰ Caleb Sibley to O. O. Howard, 12 October 1868. “Civil Unrest in Camilla, Georgia, 1868: Reconstruction, Republicanism, and Race,” *Digital Library of Georgia*, accessed 8 September 2010.

³¹ George Meade to Rufus B. Bullock, 2 October 1868. In Governor Rufus Bullock Incoming Correspondence, Box 56.

The commander further recorded that the seclusion and remote location of Camilla made it difficult to dispatch troops in a timely manner. Also, according to guidelines, Meade took orders from the civil authorities in charge. In Camilla, that person was Sheriff Mumford Poore, “the very one who is apparently most guilty.” Of course, Meade never received orders to relocate. Had he received a memorandum to report to Camilla, he would have acted fittingly. Unfortunately, with Poore in charge of Camilla, he would have dictated the role that Meade was to play. The report recalled this matter as “almost too terrible to believe.”³²

Nevertheless, George Meade was a realist. The commander also blamed William Pierce and John Murphy for the incident in Camilla. Authorities instructed freedmen to leave their weapons outside of town. Rather than adhering to Poore’s request, the politicians informed officials of their lack of responsibility for the guns. However, a man of the law asked the politicians to forfeit any and all arms. This order required obedience, regardless of its intention. Furthermore, “having their arms were utterly useless and might just as well have been left.”³³

As late as October, local authorities took no action. They arranged no civil investigation into the deaths of the whites or blacks. However, “it is not believed possible to bring the guilty parties to punishment through the Civil Authorities of Mitchell County, they being engaged in the affair, and justifying it, and no biased Jury could be found in that county.”³⁴ No reports indicated any administration of justice in the

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Caleb Sibley to O. O. Howard, 6 October 1868; O. O. Howard to John M. Schofield, 9 October 1868. “Civil Unrest in Camilla, Georgia, 1868: Reconstruction, Republicanism, and Race,” *Digital Library of Georgia*, accessed 8 September 2010.

massacre. Months following the incident in Camilla, the courthouse mysteriously burned to the ground, destroying county records.³⁵

An array of reports and interpretations of the Camilla event emerged. Some carried subtle differences, while others presented massive inconsistencies. Most accounts portrayed the events that transpired on the town square as premeditated. Accordingly, why did both James Johns and Mumford Poore warn the Republicans not to enter the city? The attack and eventual slaughter counted on the arrival of the freedmen onto the square, so attempts by both individuals to hinder the group's procession left more questions than answers. Perhaps the men tried to prevent the carnage from weighing on their consciences. Alternatively, maybe the plan included their pleas all along; they would make the blacks feel a sense of security, believing that at least some of the whites sided with the Republicans. While no evidence exists to prove the argument either way, the question deserves to be raised.

With all of the confusion surrounding Camilla and Albany in the days following September 19, 1868, a media buzz thrust the small Mitchell County town into the minds of citizens throughout the country. Newspaper editors eagerly revealed the events that unfolded in the rural South on the eve of the presidential election. Unsurprisingly, the newspapers' reports on the incident varied widely. Democratic newspapers published pro-Democratic view of the massacre and Republican newspapers printed articles that favored their party.

Semi-Weekly News of Albany, Georgia, reported the incident on September 22 and commenced the Democratic version. Republicans had used posters to advertise the

³⁵ Warren Royal and Diane Dixon, *Camilla* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), 14.

event in Camilla, but news mostly spread by word of mouth. Blacks learned of the rally and knew to expect possible altercations. This detail allowed the newspaper to conjecture that Republicans informed the blacks to attend the meeting armed, which, the paper claimed, nearly all of them did. It further stated that every plantation between Albany and Camilla had more armed freedmen waiting to join the procession. *Semi-Weekly News* also suggested that Republicans understood the circumstances surrounding the speakings but still decidedly marched with weapons into Mitchell County. According to the newspaper, the group intended to incite trouble in Camilla. Upon entering town, an inebriated individual, armed with a shotgun, approached the band wagon. The man fired the first shot into the ground.³⁶ Following this one shot, over one hundred armed freedmen returned fire. Only twenty or thirty white citizens of Camilla carried arms, but they returned enough fire to run the blacks out of town.³⁷

On the same day, a slightly different account appeared in a Virginia paper, but still supported the Democrats. The paper noted that two hundred armed Republicans marched from Albany to Camilla with enough arms and ammunition to battle for three weeks. These terrorists, acting under the premise of political rights, headed to the city with the sole intention of overthrowing local Democratic governments and murdering those who held these offices. One concerned black citizen of Camilla informed his white neighbors about the blacks' evil and murderous intentions. The group maintained an unwavering determination, allowing nothing or no one to slow them down or deter them

³⁶ This theory was repeated in Theodore Fitz Simon's article, plus an account written in the *History of Mitchell County* by Margaret Spence and Anna M. Fleming. Margaret Spence and Anna M. Fleming, *History of Mitchell County, 1857-1976* (Camilla: Historic Mitchell County, Inc., 1976), 171.

³⁷ Albany *Semi-Weekly News*, 22 September 1868, 1, "Civil Unrest in Camilla," *Digital Library of Georgia*.

from their mission. In fact, whites warned the freedmen not to enter the town armed. However, the reckless Republicans held neither regard nor respect for the law. They continued to town, where the crowd had grown to over 400 by this time. Once the crowd of Republicans appeared on the courthouse square, they met Johns. Armed blacks pointed their weapons at the man and fired. Being intoxicated, Johns fired back. Despite a fierce battle, the whites regrouped and took back their city. They wounded or killed between 75 and 100 freedmen.³⁸ According to a Boston newspaper, local whites caused 50-100 casualties, mostly freedmen, in Camilla. Republican aggression triggered the riot. Citizens disliked the forceful nature of the Republican speakings in their hometown, and thus had no choice in the matter.³⁹

An Ohio paper claimed that Republicans and 200 blacks marched with a three-week supply of bullets and arms. The protesters intended to overthrow city officials. Republican politicians twice ignored warnings not to proceed into the town armed. Continuing to Camilla, they encountered a man named Johns, reported to be both inebriated and armed. According to the newspaper, two hundred blacks locked Johns in their sights, but despite being intoxicated, Johns managed to fire the first shot. Gunshots rang out from all over the courthouse square in response to Johns's action. Both black and white citizens of Camilla felt the need to protect their town. The Camilla residents drove the Republicans out of the city but did not chase them more than two miles.⁴⁰

³⁸ *Alexandria Gazette*, 22 September 1868, 2.

³⁹ *Boston Daily Advisor*, 9-22-1868, 1.

⁴⁰ *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 9-22-1868, 1.

The newspapers presented the Camilla Massacre to the citizens of Washington D.C. in a different manner. Blacks entered the town led by white “radical” Republicans. Good citizens of the county held off this mob. Neither blacks nor whites who called Camilla their home wanted to see the radicals speak at their courthouse. In the end, 75 African Americans lost their lives or received injuries, compared to the five wounded whites.⁴¹

Citizens of Philadelphia also read about the encounter in their newspaper, which portrayed blacks as the instigators.⁴² The Cleveland *Plain Dealer* introduced its readers to the Camilla riot in a sensationalized manner, proclaiming that Georgia’s riot was a premeditated part of Radical Reconstruction. Blacks remained unfit for advancement into society, but they became a valid threat when coupled with the Northern Republicans. Republicans armed the freedmen using money given to the federal government by the hard working taxpayers of the United States. In addition, only the best and brightest freedmen sided with the Democrats, which accounts for black-instigated Republican violence throughout Reconstruction.⁴³ The St. Paul *Daily Press* ran the version that shifted complete blame upon the blacks.⁴⁴ The Baltimore *Sun* followed suit and also blamed the freedmen. Predictably, New Orleans’s *Daily Picayune* not only blamed the blacks but used every detail to underscore its bias.⁴⁵ In an effort to demonstrate that blacks instigated the entire affair, the New Orleans *Times* maintained that freedmen

⁴¹ *Daily National Intelligencer*, 22 September 1868, 3.

⁴² *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 22 September 1868, 4; and *Public Ledger*, 22 September 1868, 1.

⁴³ *Plain Dealer*, 22 September 1868, 2.

⁴⁴ *St. Paul Daily Press*, 22 September 1868, 1.

⁴⁵ *Daily Picayune*, 22 September 1868, 1.

attacked innocent white citizens of Camilla.⁴⁶ Readers of the New York *Herald* received the same story as Washington D.C. Four hundred and fifty armed blacks instigated the riot but represented the majority of those killed.⁴⁷

Futhermore, a paper in Memphis, Tennessee, supported the idea of innocent whites.⁴⁸ On September 25, *Weekly Telegraph* of Macon, Georgia, noted that a state legislative committee had convened to investigate the matter.⁴⁹ On the next page, however, the paper lamented that blacks purposely attacked the white citizens of Camilla.⁵⁰ If the readers of the paper doubted the editor's view, the newspaper also supplied the affidavit of a respectable man to sway their sympathies. This account belonged to the sheriff of Mitchell County.⁵¹

However, not all newspapers delivered the massacre to their readers with a Democratic spin. The Albany *Journal* of Albany, New York, reported that an armed man outside of Camilla warned the marchers not to enter the town. The sheriff met with the group shortly thereafter and informed them that the Camilla residents wished to cancel their speech at the courthouse. A large crowd of whites attacked the Republicans when they reached the city. The paper estimated the dead or wounded Republicans at no less than fifty. Governor Rufus Bullock requested military presence in Camilla to preserve order. Bullock sent the request to the state legislature, where they voted against the

⁴⁶ New Orleans *Times*, 23 September 1868, 1.

⁴⁷ New York *Herald*, 22 September 1868, 3.

⁴⁸ Memphis *Daily Avalanche*, 24 September 1868, 2.

⁴⁹ Georgia *Weekly Telegraph*, 25 September 1868, 4. This committee was the major source used by Theodore Fitz Simons Jr. to argue that whites were justified in their actions.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Page 5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Page 4.

motion. The governor performed his duties as best as he could to protect his citizens. In addition, the New York newspaper also attacked southern newspapers for placing the blame solely on the blacks.⁵²

The Cincinnati *Daily Gazette* also reported on the Camilla incident. Republicans intended to march to a political meeting. Twice, the group encountered resistance. On one such occasion, the sheriff informed them that the residents refused to host the Republican rally in Camilla. Having dismissed such warnings not to proceed, citizens attacked the Republicans at the courthouse. This paper reported that most of the blacks marched unarmed. Following the end of the riot, white locals accounted for the murder or injury of fifty Republicans. The governor requested military support for the citizens of his state, but the state legislature denied his request.⁵³

The New York *Daily Tribune* drew similarities between the Georgia riot and those in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1866 and 1868. The riot left fifty Republicans dead or wounded. According to the *Tribune*, citizens of Camilla even killed a candidate for Congress. His death was a symbolic martyrdom for the upcoming election.⁵⁴

An Illinois newspaper, the Quincy *Whig*, viewed the incident as indicative of southern intransigence, claiming that the state legislature tried to support the actions by whites in Camilla but lacked proof to disprove any of the reports from the event that placed the freedmen as victims. The *Whig* hoped that the North now saw how the South truly acted in the absence of military Reconstruction.⁵⁵

⁵² Albany *Journal*, 22 September 1868, 2.

⁵³ The Cincinnati *Daily Gazette*, 22 September 1868, 3.

⁵⁴ New York *Tribune*, 22 September 1868, 4.

⁵⁵ The Quincy *Whig*, 22 September 1868, 1.

A San Francisco newspaper was the first to acknowledge the existence of two separate versions of the uprising in Camilla—one by Republicans and one by Democrats, but most chose only to present one side.⁵⁶ The Boston *Daily Journal* reported that Democrats ambushed the innocent Republicans. According to the paper, whites had escalated their assault against blacks; they not only expelled black lawmakers from the state legislature, but now were blatantly murdering them.⁵⁷ The newspaper provided a detailed analysis of the event and based its account on a letter between O. O. Howard and General Sibley.⁵⁸

Three days later, the Camilla Massacre appeared in the Iowa press as an attack against free speech.⁵⁹ The paper in Easton, Maryland, presented a neutral version of the uprising to their readers.⁶⁰ Conversely, a newspaper in Springfield, Massachusetts (one of the most important Republican newspapers at the time), reported that Republicans appeared to have instigated the riot. However, after further investigation, the editors understood that the fault rested with the citizens of Camilla.⁶¹

With the varying accounts appearing in these newspapers, confusion surrounded the event for many years. Despite certain primary details concerning the riot, most papers reported conflicting information or obvious bias. That being the case, subsequent writings on the event differ. The popular retelling of the massacre maintained that there

⁵⁶ San Francisco *Bulletin*, 22 September 1868, 2.

⁵⁷ The Boston *Daily Journal*, 23 September 1868, 2.

⁵⁸ Ibid. The *Daily Journal* made a mistake stating that O. O. Howard wrote the letter, however, O. H. Howard wrote the letter.

⁵⁹ *Daily State Register*, 26 September 1868, 2.

⁶⁰ *Easton Gazette*, 26 September 1868, 2.

⁶¹ *Springfield Weekly Republican*, 26 September 1868, 1.

were no winners or losers, only victims. For over a century, confusion caused the riot in Camilla to lie dormant in history.

Editors controlled the distribution of information to their readers. However, no investigative reporters appeared in Camilla in the days following the riot. In fact, the only way for information to travel with deliberate speed was the telegraph. The editors of local newspapers then drew from their racist backgrounds and political prerogatives to interpret the events, as noted in several articles.

The presidential election of 1868 was the first after the Civil War. The majority of the southern states had returned to representation in Congress, even if only on conditional status. Republicans nominated Union war veteran Ulysses S. Grant to run on their ticket. Horatio Seymour, Democratic governor of New York, ran as Grant's opponent. Mississippi, Texas, and Virginia remained under federal occupation during the campaign season. Florida cast its vote based on political debate in the state house; it held no public elections.⁶²

The Civil War exposed divisions within the United States, and Reconstruction, in some ways, widened them. Only seven states from the former Confederacy took part in the 1868 election. Grant received 48.5 percent of the popular vote in the South and carried five states.⁶³ Mitchell and Dougherty Counties both went Democrat in the election, adding to Georgia's 64.3 percent of the population casting ballots for Seymour.⁶⁴ It was in the hopes of such an outcome that aided the editor in his decision to

⁶² Albert J. Menendez, *The Geography of Presidential Elections in the United States, 1868-2004* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2005), 9.

⁶³ Ibid., 9.

⁶⁴ These statistics made Georgia Seymour's fourth best state. Ibid., 168-69; Ibid., 10.

run a pro-Democratic version of events in Albany's newspaper. Fraud and intimidation, however, ran rampant in southwest Georgia. Only two Mitchell County residents cast Republican ballots. In Dougherty County, poll workers, who were white, stuffed Republican ballots into their pockets, among other means of voter fraud, leading to a Democratic victory by 150 votes. Southwest Georgia's role in the 1868 campaign and election, according to historian Lee Formwalt, made "clear to most observers that campaign violence and election fraud did work."⁶⁵

Similarly, Orleans Parish in Louisiana voted Democrat in the 1868 election. New Orleans newspapers also printed a version of the Camilla Massacre with an anti-Republican (and anti-black) reformulation of events appearing in their Democratic newspaper. Louisiana's population supported Seymour in an overwhelming fashion, casting 70.7 percent of ballots on his behalf within the state.⁶⁶

In the post Civil War era, newspapers marked the common man's beacon to the rest of the country. Each editor had a political agenda that manifested itself throughout each page. Camilla's appearance on the national stage demonstrated both political and racial divisions across the country. Within the context of the massacre, politics and race became inseparable issues.

⁶⁵ Lee Formwalt, "The Camilla Massacre," 422.

⁶⁶ Louisiana became Seymour's second best state. Albert J. Menendez, *Presidential Elections*, 214; *Ibid.*, 10.

Chapter VI

“RECONSTRUCTION POLITICAL RIOTS”

The events in Camilla were unique to Mitchell County; however, the incident paralleled similar events throughout the Reconstruction South.¹ Local officers failed to take any action in a majority of these cases. No white person received punishment for a crime against a black person if that attack happened in the rural South, creating a complete lack of respect for blacks in individual communities. Despite the fact that events such as the Camilla Massacre were not everyday occurrences, they demonstrated a lingering racial tension brought on by a failed system of Reconstruction and the slave system it replaced.

Southern whites, especially former slave-owners, found life during Reconstruction lacking structure. Their frustration over emancipation often led to violence. Freedmen, as well as any whites who assisted blacks, became easy targets for Confederate veterans who lost the Civil War. The white South experienced a humiliating defeat but refused to tolerate a new order that appeared to increasingly furnish blacks with rights and privileges. Whites assumed that their own rights and privileges correspondingly diminished in a zero sum game. So they turned to extra-legal violence in order to limit black gains in both the social and political spheres.

But what is a riot? Paul A. Gilje defined a rioting mob as “any group of twelve or more people attempting to assert their will immediately through the use of force outside

¹ For a list of political riots used in this chapter see Appendix C (created by the author).

the normal bounds of law.”² For the sake of this study, a political riot will be defined by public disturbances made up of at least twelve individuals attempting to assert their will immediately using force outside the normal bounds of law, as long as the reason for such violence involved elections, political rallies or federal legislation, pitting Democrats versus Republicans within the former Confederate states.

As Sheila Smith McKoy points out in *When Whites Riot*, “When black rage explodes, it’s a riot. When white rage erupts, it’s a protest, a reaction, a political action. Or it’s invisible.”³ Law enforcement refused to contend with Reconstruction violence; these attacks remained virtually invisible to the law. Beginning with Norfolk in 1866 and continuing through Ellenton, South Carolina, in 1876, the prevalence of racially motivated political riots during elections demonstrated white aggression and black oppression. While each massacre featured distinctive characteristics, collectively, these riots highlighted the interconnectedness of political violence in the South.

George Rable, in his 1984 publication *But There was No Peace*, originally believed that “bloodshed in the South after the Civil War seemed endemic, but close examination uncovered complex patterns.”⁴ Rable’s words aptly describe Reconstruction violence. While Rable’s work covered a wide range of violent acts, this chapter examines a particular set of riots, excluding those involving the KKK. Riots fueled by rumors of black men raping white women are also excluded. This chapter only includes those riots that specifically involved political disputes near election times.

² Paul A. Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington; Indiana University Press, 1999), 4.

³ Sheila Smith McKoy, *When Whites Riot: Writing Race and Violence in American and South African Cultures* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001).

⁴ George C. Rable, *But There was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), xv.

The two most notable incidents that do not fit the current definition of political riots happened in Memphis, Tennessee, and Jackson County, Florida. In Memphis, a riot erupted from civil unrest brought on by low employment opportunities and a growing black population. Irish immigrants, accompanied by newspaper propaganda and a racist police force, inflamed racial conflict. The racial divergence, multiplied by the amount of alcohol consumed by both sides, boiled over into the streets of Memphis in 1866.⁵

Florida's Reconstruction race riot involved the KKK. The rate of violence over a long time frame made this uprising a frequent focus for studies of Reconstruction violence. Between 1868 and 1871, estimates indicated that "over one hundred and fifty people were murdered in Jackson County alone."⁶ One white woman "defend[ed] the Klan in its violence against freedmen and white Republicans, expressed the opinion that trouble had been caused by carpetbaggers, but not by the military."⁷ White citizens blamed the incident on rumors that Republicans intended to provoke their freedmen followers into rebellion. According to historian Joe Richardson, "The charges were true if the whites' definition of incitation was encouraging the Negro to assume the rights and obligations of citizens."⁸

These two incidents demonstrate the foundation for all Reconstruction hostility. Whites acted in a manner that suggested they believed they had lost rights while blacks had gained them. The political aspect of racial aggression during Reconstruction acted as a catalyst, ready to ignite extra-legal violence. Whites methodically vanquished the

⁵ Ibid., 33-42.

⁶ Joe Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877* (Tallahassee: The Florida State University, 1965), 50.

⁷ Ibid., 127.

⁸ Ibid., 169.

Republican Party from the South by way of widespread political riots, even if it was not always the primary goal. Local citizens of every city that experienced political violence found motivation from past incidents that drew no punishment, an inherent racist tradition, and a desire to limit the newly gained rights of blacks.

The first Reconstruction race riot took place in April 1866 in Norfolk, Virginia. Congress succeeded in overriding Andrew Johnson's veto of the Civil Rights Act of 1866. Blacks in the area planned a celebration, an occurrence that did not sit well with local whites. Freedmen reserved a field for the occasion and secured many attendants for the rally. Whites upset with the passage of the new legislation and the black demonstration taunted freedmen as they marched towards the field. Upon reaching their destination, a fight broke out and a black teenager fired a shot from his pistol. An intoxicated off-duty police officer successfully apprehended a freedman, albeit the wrong one. This further instigated the blacks into action, but they were eventually disarmed, not before, however, one Confederate veteran and his stepmother died because of the melee. Also, three more whites received serious injuries due to beatings at the hands of blacks. With the African Americans disarmed, local whites targeted them after night fell on April 16. By dawn, a reported three blacks died, but, as in the case for Camilla, the total dead was much higher.⁹

Three months later, in July 1866, New Orleans, Louisiana, experienced its first racially motivated political riot. This event demonstrated every motivational factor present in Camilla in 1868: a political rally or, in New Orleans's case, a constitutional convention; and violence clearly waged along racial lines. George Rable referred to it as

⁹ Melinda Meeks Hennessey, "To Live and Die in Dixie: Reconstruction Race Riots in the South" (Ph.D. Dissertation: Kent State University, 1978), 17-21.

“a transitional event in the history of Reconstruction, marking a shift from social and economic disturbances to those based on politics.”¹⁰

New Orleans forcibly underwent the beginnings of Reconstruction earlier than most Confederate states, which allowed for early planning on the part of both blacks and Republican leaders in the North. However, in the election for delegates to the 1864 state constitutional convention, no former slave or black person received the opportunity to cast a ballot. The resulting constitution did not define blacks as citizens of the state, nor did it facilitate voting rights for freedmen.¹¹

In July 1866, blacks sought to secure a new constitutional convention in order to protect and exercise their newly acquired rights, one that would include black enfranchisement in the selection process of delegates. The state scheduled the convention for July 30, 1866. The white citizens knew that President Andrew Johnson would not send in federal troops; this assurance allowed them to plan at will. Blacks held a rally in an effort to gain support among fellow Republicans. Even though white speakers headlined the rallies, the crowd consisted mostly of black people. The crowd needed little urging or excitement as they eagerly anticipated the opportunity to assemble under a common political cause. But on Saturday, citizens read about radical blacks convening with the purpose of threatening the whites of New Orleans. One paper even claimed that the speakers begged blacks to return on Monday with weapons. Similar inaccuracies fueled outrages against the black race throughout Reconstruction. On the

¹⁰ Rabl, *No Peace*, 43.

¹¹ Steven Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 104-105.

same day, the New Orleans *Daily Crescent* ran a two-week-old story. The headline read “A Negro Attempts to Violate a White Woman.”¹²

By noon, July 30, a large crowd had come together at the meeting place. Though some of the blacks arrived armed, the majority arrived unarmed. Some members of the crowd were black Union army veterans. Not enough delegates showed up at the convention to make a significant difference; the head of the group had to send for the remainder of the delegates. While this scene unfolded, a group of whites assembled near the convention. Farther away, an armed group of blacks who had fought in the Civil War marched toward the convention. These veterans were fearless. Like the precursor of the Camilla Massacre, a band led these men to the convention.¹³

Republicans felt that the number of blacks in the local convention hall signaled a target for destruction. White leaders ordered the crowd to disperse to prevent them from getting hurt; however, once the Republican activists reached the street, they noticed that the police had erected a barricade in the street that trapped them inside the building. Firing commenced almost immediately. The black veterans stacked themselves into a line as they retreated into the building. In an attempt to keep the whites outside, some blacks fired at them, while others threw objects into the crowd. Back in the main room of the building, Republicans sought to restore the peaceful assembly that those without arms had intended for the convention. Just then, three police officers appeared and opened fire on a group of innocent blacks. The police force ceased fire only to reload their weapons.

¹² Justin A. Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War: Race, Politics, and a New Birth of Freedom* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2010), 67; James G. Hollandsworth, *Absolute Massacre* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 43-44; *Ibid.*, 50-53; *Ibid.*, 54; 57.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 97-99.

The white Republicans pleaded with the officers to stop shooting; they even surrendered themselves to the authorities. However, the men of the law resumed firing.¹⁴

Meanwhile, the crowd continued to grow, and the blacks grew weary of their entrapment inside the convention hall. One by one, Republicans ran out of the building in the hope of freedom, but most ended up shot, wounded or dead. Whites even targeted random blacks who had nothing to do with the meeting. In an office across town, a judge issued arrest warrants for delegates who attended the convention on the charge that the meeting lacked peaceful origins. At this time, a full-blown race riot transpired at the convention. “They were political mercenaries,” wrote historian James Holladsworth, “who could be counted on to intimidate, beat, or even murder a man to keep him from voting.”¹⁵

Dead bodies littered New Orleans. Officials hid the actual number of casualties by having prisoners load the deceased into wagons and clean up the city. The victims laid everywhere, lining the street in front of the convention hall. Once the federal troops finally arrived on behalf of the delegates, the only important job that remained was to count the dead and wounded. Unlike Camilla, New Orleans sparked a December 1866 Congressional committee investigation of the incident. However, in the end, nearly fifty men had lost their lives, and more than three times this number had received serious wounds.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ibid., 107-109.

¹⁵ Ibid., 118-121; Ibid., 124-125; Ibid., 69; 73.

¹⁶ Ibid., 129; Nystrom, *New Orleans*, 67; Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm so Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 281.

As George Rable noted, New Orleans's riot had changed the landscape of political altercations for the remaining era of Reconstruction. Cyrus Hamlin remarked, "I have seen death on the battle field but time will erase the effects of that, the wholesale slaughter and the little regard paid to human life I witnessed here on the 30th of July I shall never forget." This riot shocked the North and left people fearing a return to pre-Civil War politics in both state and national arenas. "More than any previous episodes of Reconstruction violence," Rable noted, "the New Orelans riot marked the emergence of disorders directly related to the central political issues of the day: the restoration of state governments, [and] the dangers of returning Confederate influence."¹⁷

Whites fought against Reconstruction, as evident in Norfolk and Louisiana. Their goal was to suppress the radicalism of Reconstruction, but the bloody political riots, accompanied by the Irish fight in Memphis, led Congress to pass the first and second Reconstruction Acts, thus dividing the South into five military districts. In addition, rioting cost whites the one thing they had fought against—black voting rights now needed state sanction prior to readmission into the Union.

During this transition into Radical Reconstruction, another political race riot occurred in Mobile, Alabama, during 1867. Two northern Republicans, William Kelley of Pennsylvania and Henry Wilson from Massachusetts, made their way across the South delivering speeches in scheduled cities. The politicians addressed a crowd in Mobile on May 14 at 9:00 p.m. Several hundred residents, both black and white, turned out to hear Kelley and his constituents speak. The speech remained peaceful until Kelley challenged derogatory comments that appeared in the *Mobile Times* in the days prior to the speech. Whites in the rear of the crowd began heckling and threatening the speaker, "Put him

¹⁷ Rable, *No Peace*, 58.

down.” Kelley initially overlooked the comments but eventually answered, “Nobody had better undertake to put me down. I tell you the 15th U.S. Infantry are at my back, and if the 15th U.S. Infantry cannot maintain my rights as they were maintained in Memphis, I have the U.S. Army to fall back upon. I am not afraid of being put down.” The local police chief intervened and arrested a local businessman believed to have instigated the numerous comments aimed at Kelley. At this precise moment, a noisy and loud disturbance sounded from up the street. Panic spread throughout the crowd. Whites attempted to charge Kelley, but the black attendants pushed back in order to protect their Republican speaker. Gunfire began ringing out and the politicians took cover. The crowd quickly dispersed, which limited the casualties in Mobile. Unlike in New Orleans, Camilla and Norfolk, the police did not move in to push the rioters to commit more destruction nor did they take part in the riot. They instead hid until the small riot ended, then returned to assist once everything quieted down.¹⁸

The riot angered General John Pope, commander of the Third Military District that included Georgia, Alabama and Florida. In response to the disturbance, Pope issued General Order No. 25, which stated that Alabama’s riot commenced due to irresponsibility on the part of the police force. “In the future some civil authority, either city or county, must attend each public political meeting to ensure the peace, and if a riot did occur and the civil officers could not show that everything possible had been done to prevent it, they would be held responsible.” While Pope’s resolution did little to curb future riots, it demonstrated his attitude towards the ignorance of civil duty.¹⁹

¹⁸ Melinda Hennessey, “Live and Die,” 53-59.

¹⁹ Ibid., 53-59.

The next year, however, the South experienced more riots than in any other year during Reconstruction, resulting in even more casualties. Black men could now vote, but whites needed to maintain superiority. This attempt for control materialized blatantly in St. Landry Parish, Louisiana, on September 28, 1868, when tensions exploded once again. St. Landry housed a massive black majority, who demonstrated excitement over the radical state constitution written in April. Still though most parishes with black majorities elected Republicans, St. Landry did not. As typical in the South, white support for the Republican Party remained rare, which practically forced freedmen to support the party. Still, the white minority by and large retained power, although some free persons of color occasionally played important roles. Democrats hoped to appeal to the black population in St. Landry and even formed African American Democratic groups under the whites' watchful eyes. Nevertheless, Democrats did not totally abandon the practice of violence.²⁰

The efforts of local Republicans yielded little results, as white Democrats used violence as a method of control. They also attempted to lure blacks into the Democratic Party. In order to preserve their safety, black Republicans met just outside of town. However, one of these meetings became unruly. A group of freedmen, who were under the influence of alcohol, marched into town chanting anti-Confederate slurs. The incident added to the parish's atmosphere of racial uneasiness. Republicans scheduled a rally for September 13, but this event bred rumors. Whites believed that blacks intended to burn the town of Washington, Louisiana, to the ground. Rather than allowing local authorities to investigate the matter, a local Democratic Club, known as the Seymour

²⁰ Carolyn E. DeLatte, "The St. Landry: A Forgotten Incident of Reconstruction Violence," *Louisiana History* 17 (Winter 1976): 41-42; *Ibid.*, 42-43.

Knights, sent a number of their members to investigate. Democrats were aware of the escalated racial tensions; they knew that the smallest altercation could trigger a widespread riot.²¹

Political tensions forced a meeting between local heads of both parties, and they ironed out an agreement. The leaders wisely banned weapons from the bipartisan meetings. The agreement between the parties basically produced little to no impact, however. Apparently, the agreement had no authority over the rest of the parish. In fact, the entire compromise dissolved in less than two weeks.²²

A carpetbagger named Emerson Bentley visited a black school on September 28, 1868. Schoolchildren fled the grounds claiming that local whites beat the Republican to death. Republicans panicked. The lack of organization caused blacks to flee the city, and others who stayed took up arms in order to protect themselves. Whites spotted these armed freedmen on the edge of town. Whites armed themselves and, via horseback, spread out to protect the city of Opelousas, Louisiana, from these groups. Rumors circulated that blacks shot at one of these small bands of armed whites, and this represented the last straw for the Democrats.²³

Whites from surrounding towns, cities and parishes rushed to protect Opelousas. These men divided into small groups, and any unfortunate black who encountered these groups did not survive. Blacks fled the city out of necessity, but the mobs targeted the jail as well. Local whites murdered all but two black inmates. This racial search-and-

²¹ Ibid., 44-45.

²² Ibid., 45.

²³ Ibid., 45-46.

destroy mission lasted for about two weeks and claimed the lives of an estimated 200 African Americans. However, Emerson Bentley did not die; instead he fled the parish.²⁴

Clearly, the blacks in St. Landry, Louisiana, protected themselves more effectively than those in Mitchell County could. Citizens ambushed the Republicans in Camilla with nothing but empty threats lining the way. Events such as the Americus rally should have provoked blacks to skip the speech in Camilla, but this event did not receive real attention because of the lack of committed violence. However, the threats in St. Landry were real, and the blacks reacted accordingly, even though they had more time to prepare.

A month after St. Landry, New Orleans had yet another encounter with racial violence surrounded by political causes. However, this time blacks did a better job of protecting themselves. On September 22, 1868, a group primarily consisting of black Republicans marched through New Orleans, but this march did not intimidate the white citizens. A group of whites heckled the crowd. This upset the marchers, who chased the whites into a local bar, after which whites opened fire on the blacks. The blacks, in turn, fired back. Violence spread like a tidal wave throughout the neighborhood, but then stopped completely and immediately.²⁵

On October 24, 1868, processions of both political parties met each other on the road. Whites fired one shot in the direction of the Republicans. The groups ran towards each other, but as the Democrats continued firing, the blacks retreated. A majority of the blacks had arrived unarmed, and therefore sustained the highest number of casualties in

²⁴ Ibid., 46-47.

²⁵ Melinda Meek Hennessey, "Race and Violence in Reconstruction New Orleans: The 1868 Riot," *Louisiana History* 20 (Winter 1979): 77-79.

the skirmish. This upset the black Republicans, and they returned home with the purpose of arming themselves. At this point, whites became the targets. Blacks openly attacked whites, which sharply contrasted with prior attacks. Unsurprisingly, federal troops arrived in the city after the violent killing spree; tardiness remained customary in New Orleans.²⁶

The violence continued until October 28. The Louisiana legislature estimated that sixty-three people lost their lives during this riot. Democrats mounted a massive victory in the November election. Blacks faced deadly consequences if they attempted to cast ballots; in fact, Governor Henry Warmoth advised them to refrain from voting. Judging from the results of the November elections, the riots proved successful for white Democrats.²⁷

The second riot in New Orleans mirrored the previous incident in 1866, but African Americans prepared themselves more effectively, which allowed them to lead attacks against whites. This circumstance demonstrated the greatest difference between Camilla and New Orleans. Had blacks in Camilla been able to adequately arm themselves, perhaps a similar outcome would have transpired. However, freedmen in Reconstruction southwest Georgia experienced a completely different world than those in Louisiana.

Camilla's political uprising seemingly devastated the state in 1868. Elections came and went without riot, until Savannah's incident in November. The third day of the month marked voting time in Chatham County. Blacks, hoping to avoid violence and

²⁶ Ibid., 80-82.

²⁷ Ibid., 88-90.

intimidation, arrived at the polls well before sunrise. Democratic voting officials, making up eight of the nine total, harassed the African American voters. This severely hindered the voting process. When white railroad workers made their way to the polls, it was eight o'clock in the morning. These voters, surely Democrats, began complaining of lost wages and potentially jobs if they did not vote soon. Officials permitted whites to move to the front of the line without sharing this decision with any of the blacks. Fighting commenced and the sheriff of Chatham County called for contingency protection. Meanwhile, bullets began flying around the election line, and both races made their separate ways. Despite Savannah's riot being short, the casualties were high because of the tight quarters in which rioters fired. Democrats won in Georgia, both in Mitchell and Chatham counties, not only at the polls but in the violence surrounding elections.²⁸

Violence returned to Mobile in 1869. The August ballot pitted Democratic candidate Colonel W. D. Mann against the carpetbagger Alfred Buck. Election officials, with results counted by August 5, announced Buck as the victor. Black residents of Mobile and their white Republican counterparts planned a celebration in Buck's honor. Rumors began swirling about evil intentions and Democrats claimed that freedmen had contemplated hanging Mann in effigy. At eight in the evening, over 1,000 Republican activists stood at the same site where Kelley's speech ended in chaos two years earlier. Heckling again caused a break in the proceedings when Democrats cheered for Mann while Republicans attempted to cheer Buck louder. One bullet discharged from an unknown person's pistol and this was enough to disperse the crowd. Both sides, however, fired at each other while walking away. The second riot in Mobile left four

²⁸ Melinda Hennessey, "To Live and Die," 130-135.

dead (three black and one white) and several more wounded. This riot was the only of its kind in 1869.²⁹

The trend of Reconstruction riots continued on November 7, 1870, on election day in Baton Rouge. Balloting transpired without violent incident, although fraud manifested itself as in many elections during Reconstruction. Governor Warmoth had limited the number of voting locations to four, eliminating those in areas where Democratic violence had surfaced in the past. Warmoth's efforts paid off and the entire parish voted peacefully. After the polls closed, officials withdrew to the courthouse in order to count ballots. Before counting began, a white mob stormed the courthouse and began firing on officials, targeting black officials in particular. After the riot ended, two Republicans were dead and at least twenty others wounded. The sheriff, just like in Camilla, played a major role in planning and executing the raid. A freedman gunned down the only dead Democrat, Nathan Bryan, because Bryan had fired upon blacks attempting to flee.³⁰

A violent Reconstruction political riot took place in Macon, Georgia, the next year. Officials set aside October 2, 1872, as the day for elections. Macon voters, however, only had one day to cast a ballot and only one place in which to do so. Democrats claimed that previous fights taking place in the city were because of blacks, and in order to eliminate any such result in 1872 extra police officers patrolled the city. Their main objective was to preserve order during the civil duty of voting. Rumors circulated that black Republicans had practiced military tactic drills in preparation for taking over the city on October 2. Whites and blacks fought for positions in line on the

²⁹ Melinda Hennessey, "To Live and Die," 135-139.

³⁰ Ibid., 159-160.

day of the elections. Both races determined to be the first to vote. Bricks began flying through the air, followed closely by bullets. Members of both political groups lost their lives that day and blame fell on the Macon police force, especially the additional officers hired for this particular occasion, much like New Orleans in 1866 and Camilla in 1868.³¹

The next attempt to eradicate the Republican Party from the South and to limit the gains of freedmen took place in Colfax, Louisiana. The events unfolded on Easter Sunday of 1873 and became the bloodiest riot in United States history. While Camilla's riot revolved around the right for political equality, the massacre in Colfax demonstrated frustration amidst the political power struggle for party supremacy. Leading up to the election of 1872, Republicans attempted to recapture control of the valley region of the state, which had been lost since the 1868 elections. Republicans targeted Democrats for cross-party recruitment, whereas campaigners coerced blacks into switching parties in St. Landry. Using this tactic, voters elected blacks into local office, a situation that upset whites. William Ward, a black Republican, witnessed a white friend's murder. Ward rounded up some men to arrest the murderers, but Governor Warmoth ordered his subordinates to disband the group. Ward refused to disperse his posse, which strengthened the Republicans. However, rival factions formed within the Republican Party, and both believed they had won the election.³² Rumors soared regarding which group had control, until Warmoth seized control of the courthouse.³³

³¹ Ibid., 182-183.

³² The side opposite of Henry Warmoth consisted of both Republicans and Democrats, just acting under the blanket of the Republican Party.

³³ Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet*, 292-294.

An armed band of Klansman unsuccessfully attempted to enter Colfax early in April. Attacks became a frequent occurrence over the next days, and one of these attacks resulted in the murder of a freedman in the countryside. The attacks forced blacks to take refuge in the city, where most of these blacks camped at the courthouse for the next week. Democrats were ill-equipped to remove the intruders and called in reinforcements. The Democratic-Republican coalition outnumbered the Republicans at the courthouse three to one, at least in regards to armed individuals. On the ninth of April, Ward left Colfax in the direction of New Orleans, hoping to secure a dispatch of federal troops to the city.³⁴

By Easter Sunday, both sides had grown restless. A sheriff representing the Democratic-Republican faction delivered an ultimatum to the Republicans. The faction guaranteed safety for blacks to exit the city as long as they surrendered their weapons. The Republicans felt it was their duty to protect the courthouse and prepared for a fight. Allowing time for the Republicans to remove women and children, the faction began firing on the Republicans just before one in the afternoon. Democrats maintained a check until around 3:00 p.m. At this time, the faction unleashed the cannons. Blacks fled as whites charged. Some ran for the safety of nearby woods, while others sought protection in the courthouse. Unfortunately, the faction lit the courthouse on fire and picked off the Republicans as they exited. The faction took just under fifty prisoners following the ceasefire, promising to free them the next morning. The prisoners met their end,

³⁴ Ibid., 294.

however, in a cotton field on the edge of town after night had fallen on Colfax. When the riot ended, more than 100 blacks lost their lives.³⁵

Colfax's incident revolved around party supremacy, whereas in southwest Georgia, Democrats reigned. The state government purged black legislators from politics because the state Constitution of 1868 did not specify the eligibility of black people to hold office in the state. Also, in Colfax, a small number of black Republicans obtained the opportunity to defend themselves in a better fashion than those in Camilla. In both places, whites ambushed freedmen and the guarantee of safety materialized only if blacks gave up their weapons. These options maximized the death tolls in both locations.

On 3 November 1874, election day in Eufaula, Alabama, a riot broke out. Elias Kiels, Republican scalawag, was hated by his fellow whites, but was the leader of local Republicans. Democrats vowed to ban together so that their party would win in 1874's election. Local Democrats created the White Man's Club with the intention of adding a spark to politics that would result in more whites participating. Kiels appealed to the governor of Alabama for soldiers in Eufaula on the day the county voted, but the governor denied this request (although a small number of troops arrived in the town on November 3). Black voters, much like in Camilla, marched into town. Their goal was for freedmen to safely cast a ballot. Kiels requested that all blacks arrive in town unarmed, an order adhered to by a majority of the group. Eufaula had three polling places, and each produced crowds that spilled over into the streets. Shortly after midday, an altercation broke out between black Republican Milas Lawrence and a white pharmacist named Charles Goodwin. Goodwin charged Lawrence with intimidation of a

³⁵ Ibid., 294-295.

black Democrat, but Lawrence believed it was white intimidation that led the black man to join the Democratic Party. Lawrence eventually questioned the black Democrat's voting eligibility because of his age, forcing Goodwin to pull a gun on Lawrence. At this time, several whites from surrounding businesses began firing on a group of freedmen. The firing from multiple locations in town, exactly like Camilla's courthouse riot, suggests a level of premeditation and planning.³⁶

Violence returned the same day in Mobile, Alabama. Democratic politicians informed their constituents to pay special attention to black voters. The belief was that freedmen were voting multiple times. Local whites ran some blacks from the polls before they were able to cast one ballot, let alone two. County police officials arrested freedmen on bogus charges of violating voting laws. Once blacks were securely in custody, whites began firing on the freedmen. Democrats blamed black leader Allen Alexander for causing the riot, although whites had fired the shots. Sheriff's deputies agreed with the accusations against Alexander and arrested the freedman. Worried blacks stormed the jail in order rescue their leader before county officials had an opportunity to harm him. With Alexander safely out of jail, the rioting stopped but many freedmen were not able to vote. Mobile's third disturbance was different from the other two, but its causes still emanated from political causes.³⁷

In another area plagued by a Reconstruction race riot, black Republicans carried the offices in Warren County, Mississippi, during the November 1874 elections. In fact, in the year 1874, the sheriff was a freedman named Peter Crosby. Threats forced Crosby to surrender his position; however, with the backing of a Republican governor, officials

³⁶ Rable, *No Peace*, 116-117.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 117.

restored him to his post. While this decision benefited the freedmen, it angered whites. Blacks began to march toward Vicksburg, but Crosby feared the worst and tried unsuccessfully to turn around the crowd. Whites opened fire on the blacks, which forced a retreat. For the next two weeks, Mississippi Democrats, along with supporters from Louisiana, targeted blacks. When the fighting ceased, whites had murdered almost thirty freedmen, and authorities called for the resignation of Crosby once more.³⁸

The event in Warren County illustrated white anxiety over black politicians holding local offices. These sentiments spawned large-scale riots throughout the South during Reconstruction. White former slaveowners kept blacks enslaved during the antebellum period because of the argument that slaves lacked the capability of living as part of a civilized society. Whenever blacks gained any semblance of political equality, white Southerners sought to regain control over the inferior race. Events such as those in Warren County, Mississippi and Camilla demonstrate this fact.

In the same year, violence returned to Louisiana. White citizens of Coushatta murdered eleven Republicans. The victims consisted of five blacks and six white office-holding Republicans, even though some had previously abdicated their positions. Whites threatened one freedman with fire and then burned him alive. No one was punished for the murders.³⁹

A few weeks later, Democrats held a rally to justify the actions in Coushatta. Despite calls for peace by political leaders, a number of whites acquired additional guns in preparation for racial contention. In a New Orleans meeting set for September 14,

³⁸ Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet*, 297-298.

³⁹ Nicholas Lemann, *Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2006), 76.

Democrats set out to incite a riot by making references to the French Revolution in order to stir up Confederate veterans. The “Battle of Liberty Place” pitted Democrats against state militias and police officers in a skirmish that lasted almost a week; dispatched federal troops eventually restored order. This 1874 riot, according to historian Justin Nystrom, “was an unmistakable reflection of the nation’s growing distaste for Republican Reconstruction policy and perhaps even black civil rights.”⁴⁰

This particular riot stemmed from tensions surrounding the rights awarded to black people following the Civil War. Whites commenced the practice of vigilante justice by attacking freedmen. Similar to the case in southwest Georgia, these reports went without investigation or imprisonment. Such incidents set the stage for larger attacks, and in this regard, strong similarities existed between New Orleans and Camilla. However, in this riot, whites willingly defended freedmen.

In 1875, three Reconstruction riots took place in the state of Mississippi, the first of which occurred in Yazoo City. On the first of September, Republicans held a rally. A black Democrat interrupted the meeting soon after it commenced. Southern Democrats hoped that Republicans would attack this black man who had differing political opinions, but a confrontation never developed. Henry Dixon, a white man in the crowd, heard the speaker say something that he disliked. This led him to discharge three shots in the direction of the speaker, who escaped out the window. The city echoed with the sounds of the emergency bell, causing whites to rush onto the scene. Black citizens fled from the armed whites and the city. The Democrats had overtaken Yazoo City. Of all the riots during Reconstruction, Yazoo City’s resembled Camilla’s the most in reference to blacks

⁴⁰ Nystrom, *New Orleans*, 168-176.

not having arms to defend themselves adequately. A key difference, however, is that Republicans controlled politics in Yazoo City prior to the attack.⁴¹

The next riot occurred in Clinton, Mississippi, in 1875. Three days after the Yazoo City rally, Republicans held another rally in Clinton. In order for the proceedings to remain cordial, officials banned alcohol from the family event. A prominent Republican hosted the meeting near his home in the countryside, and the party extended invitations not only to the Republican governor in office, but also to the Democrat running against him. Only the Democrat accepted, and white Democratic supporters attended the rally with their candidate. The Democrat spoke first, and the crowd of over 2,000 gave him no problems, even though this crowd consisted primarily of black Republicans. However, as soon as Republicans began to speak, Democratic supporters harassed the speaker, inciting tensions. In no time, the event escalated from talking to shoving, from shoving to fighting, then to shooting. Reports blamed a white man for firing the first shot into the crowd, but many more shots followed.⁴²

Blacks cleared the city quickly, but rumors among the white community insisted that armed Republicans marched towards town. By the time the firing ceased, William Montgomery, commander of the army and Confederate veteran, found insufficient evidence and refused to send his men to town. This withdrawal meant violence would rain on blacks for the next week as former Confederates hunted freedmen down.⁴³

⁴¹ Lemann, *Redemption*, 108-109.

⁴² Ibid., 110-112.

⁴³ Ibid., 112-119.

Lowndes County's Columbus experienced Mississippi's next and last altercation in 1875. A split Republican ticket created most of the tension in the small town, but in November Democrats attacked. Former slave and local politician Robert Gleed led a group of black marchers. Whites set three fires in the town and Gleed's activists quickly disbanded for safety. Once freedmen returned to their homes, they found whites firing on their residences or the obvious evidence that such an attack had already taken place. The fires and isolated attacks on blacks forced freedmen to take refuge in nearby woods. Many continued to sleep in the forests for weeks, only coming out under the protection of daylight. Very few blacks voted in Columbus's election that year. Those who did cast Democratic ballots. In fact, on election day the decomposing bodies of at least two dead freedmen laid on the ground in plain sight, an obvious intimidation tactic.⁴⁴

The Yazoo City riot resulted as an outbreak from political violence at a Republican speech. In this case, black Democrats played a role. In Camilla, one black man supposedly tipped off the white citizens of Camilla. According to Poore's affidavit, Crawford Broadnax reported that black Republicans traveled from Albany to Mitchell County, armed and dangerous. Clinton's uprising derived from Yazoo City's riot, which confirmed O. H. Howard's prediction following Camilla that another large-scale event would take place. As reported in Poore's affidavit and circulating rumors, armed black people headed toward Clinton. Whites in Columbus set fires to distract freedmen in order to attack their homes, where as Poore's posse sought to ensure blacks never returned home. The details were different, but the pattern remained the same.

The final racially motivated Reconstruction political riots took place in South Carolina in 1876. The first outbreak of violence was in Charleston. State Democratic

⁴⁴ Hennessey, "Live and Die," 306-308.

officials grew tired of their nominal existence since 1870. Violence and intimidation had worked well throughout the South. Whites in three counties (Berkeley, Aiken and Charleston) vowed to resort to any needed method to regain control.⁴⁵ White businessmen informed their black workers that they would be fired unless they switched to the Democratic Party. Furthermore, white property owners refused to rent their houses to known Republican freedmen. There was also a call for the removal of all black female domestic workers within the state (only if their husbands were Republicans, which was the majority) because officials believed that these women stole food. Without these meals, Democrats could starve black Republicans into conversion. Republican freedmen attended a Democratic meeting in Charleston and heard some of the ideas bandied in September. Outraged at what they heard, the blacks left in protest. Whites vowed protection for their new political brethren, and decided to approach the Republicans without assistance from black Democrats. As blacks neared the white posse, one man fired a shot into the air in order to scare the freedmen back. This warning fire, however, attracted more blacks than it scared. By the hundreds freedmen came running. Bullets and rocks began flying across the street from both sides. Blacks found themselves in the majority and easily overpowered the Democrats. They also outnumbered the police force sent into restore order. The ruthlessness displayed by the freedmen in Charleston, perhaps because of political tensions, led Democrats to turn the “bloody shirt” onto the black Republicans. For years after the Civil War, Republicans blamed Democrats for the

⁴⁵ Ibid., 224.

war, which is what the shirt represented. The Charleston riot laid the groundwork for South Carolina's Red Shirt campaign.⁴⁶

Violence continued in Ellenton when armed Democrats rode the countryside on horseback attacking and "disrupting Republican political activity" in mid-September. A widespread story accused two blacks of robbing a white woman and hitting her with a stick. This report enraged the whites and impelled them to seek revenge. The week-long massacre took the lives of seventeen blacks. The massacre involved political activities but originated outside the political realm. Around 150 blacks died during the 1876 campaign in South Carolina alone.⁴⁷

The next month, on October 16, bipartisan officials scheduled a political meeting and rally for Cainhoy, South Carolina. Cainhoy was even smaller than Camilla and a majority of the attendants came from nearby Charleston. Democrats and Republicans rode the same ferries into the small town without incident. Once the rally began, a Democratic candidate addressed the mostly black crowd with little distraction. When Republican candidate William McKinlay reached the podium, chaos ensued. Freedmen fearful of attack had hidden guns in nearby sheds and woods for protection. Young whites found a small number of these arms as McKinlay began speaking. Blacks scattered as whites continued firing. Freedmen, however, were running toward their hidden weapons and not fleeing the area as the perpetrators originally thought. Now armed, the majority began fighting back. As was the case in Charleston, whites may have

⁴⁶ Historian Melinda Hennessey called South Carolina's Red Shirt Campaign "the best known effort at overt white intimidation to overthrow Republican rule in the South during the Reconstruction period." Whites used violence, fraud and "terrorization" to return to antebellum rule. *Ibid*, 246; *Ibid.*, 347-352.

⁴⁷ Lemann, *Redemption*, 173-174.

started the riot but they quickly became overrun by freedmen. In these two incidents, blacks elevated themselves to the role of aggressor as Reconstruction politics neared an end. However, whites would have their revenge in vigilante justice and laws. South Carolina was a fitting end to racially motivated political riots because of the state's role in ending Reconstruction. During the 1876 election, this state was one of three that sent multiple election results to Congress. The resulting debate and agreements led to the Compromise of 1877, which sent Republican Rutherford B. Hayes to the White House and the withdrawal of U. S. soldiers from the South thus ending Reconstruction.⁴⁸

These riots provided a context of racial violence during Reconstruction, demonstrating that the Camilla Massacre did not exist in a vacuum, instead it fits into a specific category. A large quantity of this kind of political violence occurred throughout the former Confederate States of America with no KKK association. The violence also did not emerge from gendered origins of black men raping white women. These massacres or riots were unique in that sense, but more importantly, they ceased after Reconstruction ended because of the lack of need for such events. Simply put, no meaningful Republican Party existed in the South following the end of Reconstruction.

By way of these riots, the South mounted a defensive stand against the forced idea of Reconstruction. They revolted in several areas under the umbrella of political turmoil. Previous analytical studies of these events either treated them as isolated incidents without connecting Camilla to similar riots or focused on state and national contexts (but usually not focusing on both), but collectively, these riots were part of a broader attempt across the South to keep freedmen and Republicans in check. The trend began in Norfolk and continued through 1876, when Democrats successfully recaptured the entire region.

⁴⁸ Hennessey, "Live and Die," 363-369.

In the eyes of white southerners, freedmen made the most obvious target. Not only did these targets reside in every town throughout the South, but they also sought to excel under the post-Civil War provisions, and this proved unacceptable to whites.

Camilla's Reconstruction race riot holds its own importance within Georgia's state history, but also a place within Reconstruction history. The riot fed from its previous political attacks beginning in 1866, then became a model for many similar events that followed. But just as white southern attitudes hinged on such political violent outbursts, so too did black resolve, as freedmen became more proactive in their own defense as Reconstruction progressed to its conclusion.

Camilla demonstrated its own kind of black proactivity, and the confidence that came from continued political gains through the 1870s would only bolster black confidence and black efforts at equality, even when those efforts turned violent. No Georgia freedman exemplified political leadership throughout Reconstruction better than Philip Joiner. After surviving the Camilla Massacre, Joiner quickly returned to campaigning. On September 30, 1868, Philip Joiner wrote a letter to John Emory Bryant, chairman of the Republican Party within the state of Georgia, opining that being a black Republican was extremely dangerous in southwest Georgia. "Mr. Walker was took out of the Club room and shot by 12 of the southern so called democrats, but we dont call them democrats we call them southern merderars." Walker, a freedman and political organizer, attempted to establish a voting coalition for Grant and Colfax in the 1868 presidential election. While Walker lost his life in Early County, blacks in Baker County, which bordered Camilla's Mitchell County and separated by the natural border of the Flint River, had no choice but to flee in order to remain alive. According to Joiner,

“[F]rom last friday night, until saturday at three o clock the democrats people was riding the roads with shot guns and pistols and was looking for me murphy pierce and putney and said that we should not make any radical speech in their County, that it was their county and they was going to rule it. Those men was at Newton.⁴⁹ [T]hey went from the bridge to the Fery and swearing that we should not cross...they was riding for me, and they had pickets out all a long the road.”⁵⁰ This incident took place a week after the riot in Camilla, which means the Republicans went right back to work following the bloody massacre.

Aided by violence and fraudulent voting tactics, Democrats regained control in southwest Georgia. Joiner stepped back from politics in 1869 while out of office, but Joiner continued advocating for better positions for freedmen in labor bargaining. In October 1869, Joiner wrote an article that pointed out Dougherty County’s white men’s unwillingness to negotiate fairly with freedmen. Joiner believed that “unless Dougherty County consents to give the colored man his ‘rights,’ she will find herself without labor after the first day January next.” The idea that blacks would threaten to leave Albany, rather than withstand another year of unfair labor contracts angered local whites, and Carey Styles, editor of the *Albany News*, reprinted Joiner’s article that originally appeared in the *Georgia Republican*.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Joiner is referring to the men that ran freedmen off their land in Baker County, Newton is the county seat.

⁵⁰ Philip Joiner to John Emory Bryant, 30 September 1868 in Lee Formwalt, “Philip Joiner Reports on Campaign Violence, 1868” *Journal of Southwest Georgia History* VI (Fall 1988), 19-20.

⁵¹ O’Donovan, Susan E. “Philip Joiner: Southwest Georgia Black Republican.” *The Journal of Southwest Georgia History* 4 (Fall 1986), 64.

Also in 1869, officials invited Joiner to the first meeting of the Georgia Colored Labor Convention, which was freedmen's first attempt at a labor union. Joiner went as Dougherty County's representative, and was ultimately elected as the second vice president. The group determined that freedmen should accept nothing less than \$30 a month or three-fourths of the year-end crop. Despite the success at meeting in Macon, Dougherty County freedmen failed to capitalize on the successes of the Georgia Colored Labor Convention. When black laborers resorted to a labor strike in January 1870, wealthy whites simply fired their workers and ended any chance at further negotiations because too many blacks needed regular work in order to survive.⁵²

In January 1870, U. S. President Ulysses Grant signed legislation that reinstated the expelled black politicians. With Joiner back in Atlanta, he focused on making the freedman's and poor whites' lives better in Dougherty County. During 1870, Joiner had a 75 percent passage rate for legislation introduced into the state House of Representatives.⁵³

Joiner sought legislation that would disallow Nelson Tift, founder of Albany, from charging an extremely high toll to cross his personal bridge, Tift even charged people to walk across his bridge. The Flint River flowed down the middle of the county and separated east Dougherty County farmers from Albany. Shortly after Joiner introduced this legislation, Tift's bridge mysteriously burned down, although it was believed that freedmen resorted to arson in protest of Tift's gouging prices. This forced Joiner to introduce additional legislation to build a public bridge with tax dollars. In the

⁵² Ibid., 64-65.

⁵³ Ibid., 65; Christopher Meyers, *The Empire State of the South: Georgia History in Documents and Essays* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2008), 172; O'Donovan, "Philip Joiner," 66.

summer of 1871, nearly one year after Tift's bridge burned, Dougherty County opened its new bridge. Nelson Tift managed to gain control of the bridge and continued charging tolls. It was not until 1887 that Tift sold the public bridge, built with tax dollars, to the county for \$20,000.⁵⁴

Despite the ultimate loss, Joiner had to turn his attention to securing reelection. Joiner traveled around, much as he had in 1868, addressing labor issues to large crowds. Joiner's radical views on Reconstruction labor, such as promoting an end to contract labor in exchange for sharecropping with nothing less than one-half of the crops, attracted the attention of Styles. Styles continued his anti-Republican campaign from 1868, although in 1870, fraud was far less prevalent. Philip Joiner easily won his reelection to the Georgia House of Representatives with nearly 75 percent of the votes. Despite his appeal to freedmen for labor reform, the white elite in Dougherty County lessened Joiner's effect on the county. County courts strengthened its laws on vagrancy, which essentially forced freedmen to consent to lower waged contracts or find themselves working under court order without compensation.⁵⁵

Joiner spent 1872, which would prove to be his last in office, attempting to strike down a proposed "Sunset Law." This law prevented the sale of cotton after nightfall, without written permission from the owner of the land. While the measure had the good intention of preventing the sale of stolen cotton, officials used it to put further pressure on freedmen. Labor contracts forced blacks to work all day from sunrise to sunset and left

⁵⁴ Ibid., 66-67.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 67-69.

them no time to sell their portion of the crops. Despite Joiner's best efforts he could not defeat the "Sunset Law."⁵⁶

Joiner ultimately decided to run for the Georgia state Senate rather than seeking re-election to the house in fall of 1872. Voting officials used the same fraudulent measures from 1868, which resulted in a Democratic victory. The *Albany News* declared Joiner's defeat marked Dougherty County's "Redemption." No investigation into the election was ever performed and Joiner settled back into Dougherty County until his death in 1876 or 1877.⁵⁷ Joiner never abandoned the freedmen that voted him into office. Although he did not accomplish all he wanted, Joiner never stopped fighting.

During Reconstruction, black activism was largely state-based, for this reason, Philip Joiner and the Camilla Massacre have been understudied.⁵⁸ Joiner captured and capitalized on the black political activism of the era. Joiner overcame violence as an everyday threat and attempted to make freedmen's lives better. Massacres and riots such as Camilla were Democratic southern whites attempt to silence freedmen's gains throughout Reconstruction. The assaults continued for a decade because they did not stop freedmen from wanting to vote or enhance their lives in other ways. Whites found other means to quell black political activity over the next century, but none worked

⁵⁶ Ibid., 69-70.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 70-71.

⁵⁸ Philip Joiner was not southwest Georgia's only Reconstruction black politician. Peter Hines, who survived the Camilla Massacre, was elected Dougherty County's coroner in 1868, however, he was unable to pay the bond required for the office. Hines being unable to pay the bond, accompanied to the fact that Hines owned no property, meant that Hines could not take the office, but the Republican electorate in Dougherty County elected him to office. Two other survivors of the Camilla Massacre were elected to the Georgia state house, Howard Bunts in 1877 and Ishmael Lonnon in 1880. Bunts and Lonnon defied politics in the post Reconstruction era by being elected after redemption. Eric Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders During Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 105; Lee Formwalt, "The Camilla Massacre of 1868: Racial Violence as Political Propaganda" *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 71 (Fall 1987), 423.

completely. The political race riots during Reconstruction ranged in size and severity from Camilla and Macon to New Orleans and Colfax, but all reflected the black political movement of the decade. The number of lives lost and the amount of blood shed slowed the implementation of freedmen's rights but never ceased to fuel the next phase of the civil rights movement in Louisiana, South Carolina or southwest Georgia.

Chapter VII

CONCLUSION

September 1868's race riot in Camilla shaped state and local politics for decades to come. This tragedy marked a bitter stamp in Georgia's Reconstruction history. However, the story of this rural town in southwest Georgia did not end with the massacre. Racial tension would continue for many years to come.

Between 1880 and 1930, citizens of Mitchell County lived up to the expectations of the country; lynching essentially embodied a national pastime. For various reasons ranging from arguments to murder, whites lynched at least ten blacks in or around Camilla. This period gave way to vigilante justice, these vigilantes rarely requiring concrete evidence of wrongdoing before resorting to violence.¹ For example, the November 23, 1920, lynching of Curly McKelvey took place in Mitchell County. McKelvey was accused of murdering J. E. Adams, the overseer for the Putney-Hines farm in Dougherty County. Authorities found the "bullet riddled body of a negro," but after the lynching it was reported that McKelvey's brother, "Ophelia is alleged to be the negro who killed the farm overseer, while Curly was merely walking with him across the forbidden tract of land."²

¹ In terms of lynching, Camilla remained in sync with the state of Georgia in both volume and violence. William Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 270-280.

² Clemency Application to Governor, "Curly McKelvey," Record Group 1-4-42, RCB Number 34461. Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, GA.

In the 1950s, Sheriff W. L. “Bud” Williford ran the county with an iron hand, especially since blacks constituted the majority of the population. The sheriff shot a black man named Harrison Mobley in 1971 and Williford’s actions brought him under investigation by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1975. According to the law enforcement officer’s story, Mobley attempted to escape his custody.³ Despite Williford’s racist actions, officials did not remove the sheriff from office until the early 1980s, and then only because the sheriff was convicted of mail fraud.⁴

In the summer of 1962, Martin Luther King, Jr. learned of the violent nature of Camilla and Williford during his civil rights efforts in Albany. Marion King, wife of Slater King and sister-in-law to civil rights attorney C. B. King, traveled to the Camilla to visit Albany protestors who had been jailed there. Marion King, accompanied by two children and one more on the way, transported freshly cooked food to the jailed activists. A crowd formed outside the Camilla jail, as blacks waited for visiting hours to begin, and began to sing freedom songs. The singing agitated Williford and his deputies. The law officers demanded that the crowd step back from the gate, but apparently Marion King moved slower than the officers wanted her to, and the sheriff and a deputy walked towards Mrs. King. Williford slapped King across the face, a blow that forced her three-year-old daughter out of her arms. Not feeling satisfied, Williford slapped the expectant mother one more time. Simultaneously another officer kicked King in the shins, which forced her to fall to her knees. The sheriff and his deputy proceeded to kick Marion King several more times until she momentarily blacked out. Just as quickly as it had began,

³ *Augusta Chronicle*, 11 August 1975, 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2 December 1982, 4.

the two officers made their way back into the jail while the crowd of blacks watched in horror. This attack led to a miscarriage of Marion King's six-month pregnancy.⁵

In many ways, this region of the state served as a microcosm of racial relations throughout the entire South, from the Civil War era through the civil rights movement. The experiences of Mitchell County early in Reconstruction foretold elements of its future. Attacks on freedmen laid the foundation for the impending riot; officials failed to punish assailants in majority of these cases. In addition, Camilla residents' premeditated attack on the courthouse square instigated a massacre that created widespread panic in the region and ultimately aided in the return of Reconstruction in Georgia.

The Camilla riot and massacre was not an isolated event. It was a pivotal link in Reconstruction racial political violence. Beginning with Norfolk, Virginia, in 1866 and ending in Cainhoy, South Carolina, in 1876, riots dominated the election scene. The riots embodied the racial tension of the era but ended with Reconstruction, when the Republican Party virtually disappeared from the South. While Camilla's uprising may not have been the bloodiest riot of the period, it exposed the vulnerability that accompanied freedmen on their quest for political rights.

Whites openly attacked freedmen throughout Reconstruction without fear of punishment. In a majority of these cases, little investigating was completed. The riots examined in this thesis demonstrate the method in which southern whites committed extra-legal violence to combat black political gains. Violent outbursts served as the Democrats' way of keeping black activists and politicians in check, and the same treatment was handed out to whites that served as Republican guides to freedmen. These

⁵ Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954-63* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1988), 615-617.

political riots demonstrated that racism, oppression and a disregard for punishment by local authorities aided white southerners in choosing violence as a means to maintaining white supremacy, and in turn preserving their southern way of life.

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Appendix A:

Acts of Reconstruction Political Race

Violence Leading to Camilla

<u>Number</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Perpetrator</u>
1.	January 11	Mitchell	White
Henry McMillen, white, murdered freedman John Chivalier seemingly without motive or reason. McMillen fled the county after his bail was posted.			
2.	January 31	Early	White
George Chancey, white, murdered freedman David Hutchins following an altercation emanating from work related issues. Chancey received no punishment for his actions, but he fled to an unknown location.			
3.	February 3	Early	White
George Chancey's brother Benjamin murdered freedman Moses Alexandar without punishment. Benjamin also escaped punishment, but believed to have taken up residence in Dade County, Alabama.			
4.	February 5	Mitchell	Whites
Three white men, George Baggy, Thomas Gouldin and James Palmer, assaulted and stabbed freedman Solomon Brown. Local authorities failed to apprehend the suspects and all three remained in Mitchell County.			
5.	February 9	Dougherty	Freedman
Freedman Michael Johnson shot fellow freedman Moses Shannon without reasonably known motive. Investigators never arrested Johnson because he fled the county.			
6.	February 9	Mitchell	White
Robert Warren, white, "shot at" freedman Jack Hicks. Local law enforcement reacted by not doing anything. Warren remained in Mitchell County.			

7. February 15 Dougherty White

Jeremiah Watters, white, shot freedman Blaully Anthony in his abdomen, however, the wound was not fatal. Agents of the Freedmen's Bureau oversaw Watters arrest only to witness county authorities set him free in exchange for \$25. Watters did see his day in court, but a jury of his peers rendered him not guilty.

8. February 22 Early Whites

Two white men, William Buchanan and a Dr. Powell, assaulted a freedman John T. Gibson with a club. Gibson escaped the perpetrators while being fired upon by the white men. The two men were arrested, but freed once their bails were posted.

9. March 4 Calhoun White

James Edmondson, white, murdered his freedman employee, William Jourdeur, following a dispute of employment. Edmondson fled the county, but the governor issued a reward for his arrest.

10. March 10 Dougherty Freedman

Freedman John Thomas attacked fellow freedman Major Parker. Authorities arrested Thomas and anticipated a trial, but Parker dropped the charges under the pretense that Thomas paid all fees associated with the case.

11. March 12 Dougherty White

A white woman, Mrs. Mott, shot freedman Robert Peck in the left arm "for disobedience of orders and insolent language." The Freedmen's Bureau insisted that Mott was arrested, which she was, but Peck ultimately dropped all charges, leaving Mrs. Mott responsible for all fees.

- | | | | |
|-----|---------|--------|---------|
| 12. | April - | Schley | Unknown |
|-----|---------|--------|---------|
- Unknown assailants called Moses Hart out of his home in the dead of night. Hart received multiple gunshot wounds, including one to the face. Local authorities never arrested anyone in connection with the assault.
- | | | | |
|-----|---------|---------|-------|
| 13. | April 4 | Unknown | White |
|-----|---------|---------|-------|
- Green Harbin, white, “shot at” freedman Thomas Smith. Harbin fled the county and never received punishment.
- | | | | |
|-----|---------|-----|-------|
| 14. | April 9 | Lee | White |
|-----|---------|-----|-------|
- Elisha Irwin, white, shot freedman Henry Jourdain without known motive. Irwin fled and local authorities made no arrest.
- | | | | |
|-----|----------|----------|----------|
| 15. | April 10 | Randolph | Freedman |
|-----|----------|----------|----------|
- Ben Holland, freedman, murdered fellow freedman Silas Grant with a knife. The two had been arguing of politics. Local authorities promptly arrested the criminal, left him with no option of bail, leaving Holland to remain in jail until his court date.
- | | | | |
|-----|----------|----------|----------|
| 16. | April 11 | Randolph | Freedman |
|-----|----------|----------|----------|
- Freedman, Ben Mathison murdered fellow freedman Isham Harden, because Harden refused to sign a Loyal League Sentinel. Authorities arrested Mathison and held him on \$1000 bail.
- | | | | |
|-----|----------|-----|-------|
| 17. | April 12 | Lee | White |
|-----|----------|-----|-------|
- William Danson fled Lee County after beating freedman Thomas Foster with a club.
- | | | | |
|-----|----------|---------|--------|
| 18. | April 16 | Terrell | Whites |
|-----|----------|---------|--------|
- Six men attempted to hunt down freedman Peter Small, but Small escaped. Small did not know his attackers, thus leaving no one for local authorities to arrest.

19. April 17 Calhoun Freedman
Freedman West Hill stabbed an unknown freedman. Calhoun County officials arrested Hill.
20. April 19 Baker White
Freedman George Rhea received wounds from a white man known only as Louis. Rhea and Louis had argued over political differences. "Rhea thinks it unsafe to prosecute in Baker County, therefore no action by civil authorities."
21. April 20 Baker White
Calhoun Dean, white, shot freedman Allen Wooten. Local authorities made no arrests, and Dean felt no need to flee Baker County.
22. April 22 Mitchell White
A white man named John Bailey physically assaulted freedman Joseph Took, which left Took "badly wounded." Bailey neither fled nor was arrested.
23. April 22 Mitchell Unknown
An unknown perpetrator stabbed a freedman known only as Barron.
24. April 22 Mitchell Whites
M. J. Blythe and Thomas R. Bailey, both white, attacked an unknown freedman with clubs. Neither man was apprehended, neither fled.
25. May 5 Mitchell Unknown
"David Hudson was, without provocation, shot through the left lung by three unknown men in disguises." Officials failed to make any arrests in the matter. Being that the men were wearing disguises, one can freely believe that they were whites.

26. May 8 Baker Freedman

A freedman known as Gervis shot fellow freedman George Malloy multiple times. This case was extremely rare, local authorities failed to arrest a freedman for committing a violent outburst.

27. May 9 Calhoun Whites

James Bop, and three of his brothers (all white), pistol-whipped and clubbed freedman Green Saullers for unknown reasons. No arrests made, nor did any of the Bops flee.

28. May 10 Lee Unknown

“An unknown party” mortally wounded freedman Lilth Scrutchins with an axe, because of Scrutchins’s Republican affiliations. No arrests were made.

29. May 11 Mitchell Unknown

Nelson Halloway and his family awoke during the night to the sound of gunfire. At least twenty unknown assailants fired more than one hundred rounds into the Halloway home. Officials never arrested anyone in connection to this attack.

30. May 19 Sumter White

Peter Craghan, white, shot freedwoman Sallie Picket in the face. This action landed Craghan in jail, where authorities set his bail at \$300.

31. May 23 Dougherty White

R. Bray, white, shot his father’s employee, freedman, Henry Clay Caswell. Caswell had an altercation with R. Bray’s father, W. C., over the non-payment of due wages, and the elder Bray banished Caswell from his farm. A Freedmen’s Bureau agent sent Caswell to the Bray farm to issue W. C. Bray a summons to appear before the agent. During this trip, Caswell was shot in the head. R. Bray never went to prison because of a lack of

evidence, however, Caswell received a four-year sentence for incorrectly filing an affidavit that stated W. C. Bray had been the one that shot him.

32. April 12 Lee White

Raines, a white citizen of Lee County, stabbed freedman Jerry Lamar in the back for unknown reasons. Raines fled Lee County.

33. May 24 Dougherty White

William Toller, white, attacked freedwoman Lizzie Davis with a chair, because she “used insolent language,” leaving Davis with a broken arm. Toller was arrested, but while in custody filed charges against Davis for an alleged offense taking place months before. Authorities arrested Mrs. Davis, and the two agreed to drop charges against each other.

34. May 29 Dougherty Freedman

Jack Wright, freedman, assaulted fellow freedman Sam Boseman by striking him in the back of the head with a hoe. Civil Authorities attempted to prosecute, but Boseman dropped the charges against Wright.

35. July 1 Terrell Freedman

M. Moses, freedman, murdered fellow freedman Balenick Durigan with an axe. The local police force arrested Moses, and he was sentenced to an unspecified amount of time in jail.

36. July 4 Baker White

Jack Smith, white, shot and “dangerously wounded” an unknown freedman. The Freedmen’s Bureau reported, “Cause unknown, action of the civil authorities, (if any) unknown.

37. July 10 Stewart White

John M. Cain, white, wounded freedman Abraham Holman by shooting him with a gun. Cain was neither arrested, nor fled Stewart County.

38. July 17 Stewart White

William Austeen, white, stabbed and shot freedman Anderson Tearson for unknown reasons. Local authorities failed to make any arrests, and Austeen felt no need to flee.

39. July 27 Dougherty White

James Hall, white, attacked freedwoman Ann Hampton “with a heavy stick.” Hampton “made statements before the Agent of the Bureau contrary to his own.” The Freedmen’s Bureau urged local authorities to arrest Hall, but the perpetrator fled to nearby Baker County to avoid punishment.

40. July 29 Early White

A white man named Sam Garner severely wounded freedman Jeff Smith, Smith’s life was saved “by the interference of a friend.” Local authorities did nothing to apprehend the suspect who remained in Early County.

41. August 5 Schley White

Schley County’s John T. Lumpkin shot freedman Miles Grant for unknown reasons. Lumpkin remained in the county.

42. August 5 Clay White

Allen Dosier, white, assaulted freedman Cane Richardson for unreported reasons. Dosier never received punishment and remained in Clay County.

43. August 5 Schley White

John T. Lumpkin shot freedman John Singletary in the leg. Lumpkin remained in the county.

44. August 10 Dougherty White

Dougherty County white resident Charles McFarland attacked freedman Roland Caswell over the span for a few nights. McFarland charged Caswell with “disobedience and imprudent language towards his employer.” McFarland remained in Dougherty County.

45. August 15 Baker White

Richard Fien, white, attacked Drew Rupsel, freedman, with a knife without documented motive. Fien fled the county to avoid punishment.

46. August 17 Lee White

A white man, John Allen, pistol-whipped freedman employee, Wilson Carter. Carter allegedly used disrespectful language towards his employer. Officials did not attempt to arrest Allen, and Allen did not attempt to leave the county.

47. August 17 Lee Whites

Two whites (S. Baily and G. Brack) shot freedman Jackson Smith, but were not investigated or arrested. They remained in Lee County.

48. August 21 Stewart White

John M. Cain attacked another freedman, Dock Porter. Porter managed to barely escape with his life. Cain remained in Stewart County without punishment.

49. August 24 Quitman White

William Johnson, white, attacked freedman Charles Johnson with a club and a knife.

William Johnson refused to flee the county, but the lack of investigation left little need to leave the county.

50. August 25 Schley White

John T. Lumpkin shot freedman Edmund Frazer in the shoulder. Local authorities again failed to arrest Lumpkin.

51. August 25 Quitman White

Local physician, Dr. Christian, assaulted freedman Daniel Brown. The doctor remained in Quitman County following the incident.

52. August 26 Baker White

J. W. Pierce shot freedman Dock Randall in the chest. Officials arrested and tried Piece, but he was acquitted.

53. August 24 Randolph White

Valentine Smith shot at and assaulted freedman Allen Thornston. Local authorities did not arrest the white citizen, nor did Smith leave the county.

54. August 29 Dougherty White

A. Tryce gave two young freedmen, Andrew Harris and Washington Harrison, lashings because the minors demonstrated “disobedience of orders.” The Bureau oversaw Tryce’s arrest, local authorities set an easily attainable bail.

55. August 30 Calhoun Whites

Four white men, George Wooten, Collier, McKraken and Hendrick, dragged freedwoman Harriet King from her home during the night. Her naked body was laid over a log, and

each man proceeded to whip the freedwoman. King allegedly referred to one of Wooten's children as a mulatto. Not one of the four men was arrested.

56. August 31 Randolph Whites

Two white men, Benjamin and David James attacked George and Minnie Cassiely with axes for no reported reasons. Randolph County's police force failed to make an arrest.

57. September 1 Clay White

Allen Dosier attacked and shot an unknown freedman. Authorities did not arrest Dosier, but he fled to either Calhoun or Randolph County.

58. September 15 Lee White

Henry Calloway, white, assaulted his employee Edmund Johnson, freedman. Calloway's trial was reported to the Freedmen's Bureau, but no result was ever sent.

59. September 15 Baker Freedman

Troup Broten attacked fellow freedman Sam Mason. The dispute stemmed from an argument between the two freedmen's children. Charges were brought against Broten.

60. September 19 Schley White

Leinder Scarborough, white, shot Marsh Thompson in the shoulder "without provocation." Local authorities did not attempt to arrest Thompson's attacker.

61. September 19 Mitchell Whites

61- 72 list the victims of the Camilla Massacre. A. B. Collins.

62. September 19 Mitchell Whites

Robert Morrison.

63. September 19 Mitchell Whites

Barney Morris.

64.	September 19	Mitchell	Whites
John Watson.			

65.	September 19	Mitchell	Whites
Morris Orr.			

66.	September 19	Mitchell	Whites
James Ingraham.			

67.	September 19.	Mitchell	Whites
Dock Polhill.			

68.	September 19.	Mitchell	Whites
John Scarborough.			

69.	September 19	Mitchell	Whites
Jerry Davis.			

70.	September 19	Mitchell	Whites
John Slaughter.			

71.	September 19	Mitchell	Whites
Thomas Washington.			

72.	September 19	Mitchell	Whites
William Washington.			

73.	September 19	Mitchell	Whites
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73-87 offers a description along with the names. Disguised whites took Daniel Shields from his home on Dr. Tinsley's plantation. Shields was mortally wounded.

74.	September 19	Mitchell	Whites
Joseph Parker traveled to the Republican rally in Camilla, but never returned home.			

75.	September 19	Mitchell	Whites
“Issac Adam’s Daughter, a girl about 12 years old, was wounded in the neck and hand with a knife.”			
76.	September 19	Mitchell	Whites
Benj Sundry shot in arm, shoulder and head, but survived.			
77.	September 19	Mitchell	Whites
Henry Robinson shot in legs.			
78.	September 19	Mitchell	Whites
Randolph Jourdan shot in left leg.			
79.	September 19	Mitchell	Whites
Burrill Johnson shot in the shoulder.			
80.	September 19	Mitchell	Whites
William Sandsey struck over the head with a gun.			
81.	September 19	Mitchell	Whites
Sam Dickinson shot in the arm.			
82.	September 19	Mitchell	Whites
Wesley Chatham shot in the back.			
83.	September 19	Mitchell	Whites
William Desson shot in the shoulder.			
84.	September 19	Mitchell	Whites
Peter Hines wounded from gunshots.			

85. September 19 Mitchell Whites

John Warren shot in right leg, multiple times in the back and in the neck. Warren was also struck over the head with a gun.

86. September 19 Mitchell Whites

William Outlaw shot in shoulder.

87. September 19 Mitchell Whites

William T. Sorrell shot in hand and beat over the head with a gun. The following appeared following a description of casualties. "The names of a great many wounded persons could not be ascertained by the Bureau. The perpetrators of these acts were James Johns, M. P. Poore, Sheriff of Mitchell County, Adam Bullett, and others, all white, cause determination on their part to prevent a Republican meeting at Camilla and to punish the parties who would make an effort to do so. No action taken by civil authorities."

88. September 20 Schley Whites

"Unknown persons disguised and dressed in white sheets" severely beat Robert Wiggins (after nightfall), almost to the point of death. Schley County officials did not make any arrests.

89. September 20 Schley Whites

Assailants dressed in the same manner as in No. 88 shot at freedman Henry Davis. They arrived at Davis's home during the night. Local authorities took no action.

90. September 20 Schley Whites

Assailants in sheets beat Peter Smith, almost to death, when they arrived to Smith's house after the sun went down. Officials failed to apprehend in suspects.

91. September 26 Sumter White
James Murray physically assaulted a freedman named Alfred. The Sumter County police force arrested Murray, but “The Grand Jury refused to find a bill.”
92. September 26 Baker Whites
Freedman, Isaac Porter was forcible removed from his house, beaten and shot, just for being a known Republican and attended a political meeting. Officials made “no arrest.”
93. September 29 Calhoun Whites
An unknown group shot freedman Ralph James in the leg “from the woods,” because James was “suspected of drilling colored people secretly.”
94. September 29 Dougherty White
Deputy Marshal of Albany, James Ruby, beat freedwoman Fannie Gilmore “for having used disrespectful language toward him and wife. No arrest made.”
95. September - Unknown Whites
Three white men, James Porter, James Whitcomb and Calvin Currey, physically assaulted freedman James Jeter without punishment. Jeter was attacked “for claiming the right of whipping his own child instead of allowing his employee and former master do so.”
There no arrests made in this case.
96. October 1 Schley Unknown
An unknown party attacked freedman Thomas Perkins for unreported reasons. Local authorities did not arrest anyone.
97. October 1 Schley Whites
An “unknown masked” party ran Henry Davis and his wife from their home by bullets. Officials made no arrests.

98. October 1 Baker Whites

Two whites, King Stain and B. Foot, murdered a freedman named Hampton, because Hampton stated that he was a Republican. There were no arrests made.

99. October 6 Baker Whites

The same two whites, Stain and Foot, pursued freedman Benjamin Jackson for two hours. Jackson also said that he was a Republican, but he refused a bribe of thirty dollars to vote for Democrats in an election. The Bureau reported “it was impossible to prosecute the assailants.” Jackson, however, fled Baker County in fear.

100. October 8 Quitman White

John Moore, white, attacked freedwoman Virginia Smith with an unknown motive. Moore escaped punishment and remained in Quitman County.

101. October 10 Dougherty White

A white citizen of Dougherty County, Jeremiah Walters, killed freedman Wash Gullet by shooting him in the neck. Walters “claims to have caught him in the act of killing a pig belonging to him.” Authorities arrested Walters, but he was ultimately released when officials claimed, the next day, “that Gullet had been killed by Walters in a lawful defense of his property.”

102. October 16 Calhoun White

Allen Dosier shot and stabbed freedman Henry Wade for an unknown reason. Dosier, again, fled Calhoun County for Randolph County.

103. October 16 Stewart White

James Turner, white, shot freedman Henry James without reported motive. Officials made not arrest.

104.	October 18	Schley	Unknown	Freedman Cats Tomlinson was whipped on his abdomen by an unknown perpetrator. No punishment issued in this case.
105.	October 19	Schley	Whites	Thomas Stewart.
106.	October 19	Schley	Whites	Robert Stewart.
107.	October 19	Schley	Whites	Thomas Robinson.
108.	October 19	Schley	Whites	James Swanson. 105-108 were all “beaten by a crowd of masked white men.” This time, however, the attackers recognized one white man, Cyrus Peacock. Despite this, local authorities made no arrest.
109.	October 19	Randolph	White	R. H. Ward, white, tied freedman Jesse Ward up and beat him. Local authorities failed to bring justice in this case.
110.	October 19	Schley	Unknown	An elderly freedman named Ned Battle received at least forty lashings by an unknown party. No arrests were made.
111.	October 31	Randolph	White	Charles Stanley, white, attacked freedman Henry Prescott with a club. The argument arose by a disagreement regarding labor issues. Local authorities failed to bring punishment.

112. September - Early Whites

An unidentifiable group of whites arrived at the home of Charles Friar, a freedman, and demanded that he come outside and confront the crowd. The crowd not only murdered Friar, but also W. J. Walker, defined as “an unusually intelligent and exemplary freedwoman.” Civil authorities failed to bring justice to either murder. The governor, however, issued a \$5000 reward for the capture of the assailants.

113-278. Not in southwest Georgia

279. April 1 Thomas White

George Gibbs murdered freedman William Hardaway, and although a warrant was issued, no arrest resulted.

280. June 1 Thomas White

William Davis assaulted freedwoman Jane Ranken without punishment.

281. August 4 Thomas White

Solomon Everett shot freedman Archey Cuyler in the arm, and the local police force failed to act.

282. August 13 Thomas White

W. H. Houston assaulted freedwoman Jenny Wycher. Houston forced Wycher into nearby woods and attempted to rape her. Local authorities failed to gain justice.

283. August 25 Thomas White

Joshua Jones attacked freedwoman Jane McCulloch with a club. No punishment was reported.

284. August 26 Thomas White
Daniel Stringer, in an attempt to force a freedwoman off her land, physically assaulted Mary McIntosh. The Bureau failed to note any actions by civil authorities.
285. September 7 Thomas White
T. Perry punished freedman Hector Mitchell's child by whipping, however, Perry received no jail time for his actions.
286. September 23 Thomas White
Horace Paramoon assaulted freedman Jack Brisily, in addition Paramoon forced Brisily off his land. Paramoon was only attempting to collect his portion of the crop. The police force failed to act.
287. February 16 Decatur White
Freedman L. Wells struck a white man, Thomas E. Sprail, with a club. In retaliation, Sprail shot Wells in the back, a wound that ultimately killed Wells. "No bill found."
288. April 22 Decatur White
J. W. Brannon murdered freedman Isaiah Williams following a political argument. Brannon wound up in military court, rather than civil. The military court sentenced Brannon to the state prison for an unspecified amount of time.
289. August 13 Decatur Freedmen
Three freedmen, Sam Hill, Nelson Johnson and Ned Williams, tortured and murdered fellow freedman Jones Wait because of "a dislike of him." Despite the Bureau's listing of this assault as "Brutal Murder," and that the perpetrators were black, local authorities failed to make any arrests.

290. August 24 Decatur White

T. Brestol, white, struck freedwoman Susan Whittaker over the head following a dispute of the crop. Civil authorities failed to seek justice.

291. August 25 Decatur White

A white man identified only as Thomas attempted to shoot a freedman named Henry Clay following a dispute. The local police forced arrested Thomas, but he was quickly bailed out of prison.

292. August 31 Decatur Whites

An unknown party of whites assaulted freedman Adam Gaines during the night, and according to the Bureau, "Nothing done."

293. No 293 listed.

294. September 3 Decatur White

Rose Dickeson attacked Zeptha Jackson with a rail. Jackson filed a complaint with local authorities, but no action taken.

295. October 12 Decatur Whites

William Warren Donaldson, William Benton, William Gunn, J. E. Lassiter and John King (all white) murdered freedman Loud Leverage. Despite a confession from one of the participants, civil authorities still refused to take action.

296. January 20 Thomas Whites

William Sturger and two other whites kidnapped freedman Primus Hatch. They took Hatch to Coon Bottom, Florida, after Hatch was charged with raping "a bad woman." It

is not reported what happened after the group made it to the Florida town, but the Bureau noted that local authorities took no action. See No. 15 below. The following outrages are drawn from a separate report of additional outrages.

1-11. Not in southwest Georgia

12. October 31 Brooks White

Alfred Kelton, white, murdered freedman John Tellman. Local authorities sought no justice in this case.

13. November 8 Thomas White

John Lyon attacked a freedman named McCullough. The Bureau reported no arrests.

14. November 12 Thomas Whites

Ed Steames and other white men of Thomas County kidnapped freedman Isaac Beard, no reason reported. The local police force failed to take action.

15. January 21 Thomas Whites

Jarrett Harley and others kidnapped and murdered a freedman named Primus Hatch. The Bureau reported no action by local officers.

16. Unknown Thomas White

June Platt.

17. Unknown Thomas White

John Platt. Ed Steams kidnapped John Platt and his wife June, he murdered both of them.

Local authorities failed to take action.

Appendix B:
Civil Unrest in Camilla, Georgia, 1868
Players and Places

- Albany. Twenty-five miles North of Camilla in Dougherty County. This is where the core of the group, the band and the Republican organizers, set out from when they headed for the rally they had scheduled in Camilla.
- Broadnax, Crawford. Mentioned only in the affidavit of Sherrif Poore, Crawford Broadnax, an active member of the newly formed Colored Democratic Club of Dougherty County, was probably the writer of the letter Poore cites as warning him that "a party of black Republicans had left town on Friday heading for Camilla." Broadnax's letter added to the mounting hysteria amongst the fearful Camilla residents.
- Bullock, Rufus. Georgia Governor (1869-1871) and Republican ally of John Randolph Lewis. Bullock was governor when Georgia was re-admitted to the Union in July 1868. Requested that troops be moved to Camilla but that request was denied by General G. Meade.
- Bunts, Howard. Nineteen-year-old freedman. Carpenter and fife player in Peter Hines' band. In 1877 he was elected to the Georgia State Legislature.
- Bureau of R.F. and A. L. The Bureau of Refugees Freedmen and Abandoned lands. See Freedmen's Bureau.
- Camilla. Seat of Mitchell County, in southwest Georgia. Albany, in Dougherty County and twenty-five miles from Camilla, is the nearest town.
- Fish and Flaggs Plantation. Plantation owned by Edwin Flagg and William W. Fish, both staunch Republicans. The band spent Friday night there as it journeyed to Camilla. The plantation neighbored that of Francis F. Putney and Varnum H. Flagg.
- Freedmen's Bureau. The Bureau of Refugees Freedmen and Abandoned lands. Usually referred to as The Freedmen's Bureau. In the letters and on some letterheads it may be abbreviated as Bureau of R.F. and A. L. The bureau was a War Department agency staffed primarily by army officers and was fully operational only from about June 1865 through December 1868, though it remained operational until 1870. Its official demise, however, was not until June 1872. Organized hierarchically, it was headed by a commissioner in Washington, the same man throughout the five years of its operation, Oliver Otis Howard, or O.O. Howard as he is referred to in many of the letters. There were assistant commissioners in charge of operations in the former Confederate states, the Border States, and the District of Columbia. For most of the time period we are concerned with in the Camilla documents, the assistant commissioner for Georgia was Caleb Sibley. Officers subordinate to the assistant commissioners, known as sub-assistant commissioners, field agents and officers performed the actual work of the bureau.

- Gallagher, M. Frank. Brevet Captain M. Frank Gallagher, an adjutant to Caleb Sibley. His name and signature frequently appear at the bottom of documents for which at some point he served as a witness, along with the words "a true copy."
- Hines, Peter. Leader of an Albany band that played at political meetings in the area. The band included fife player Howard Bunts and drummer William Outlaw.
- Howard, Brevet Major O.H. Union Army veteran, subassistant commissioner for the fifteen counties in the Albany area, his assignment included Albany and Camilla, Mitchell and Dougherty counties. Reported to the State Headquarters in Atlanta, but worked out of the office in Albany.
- Howard, O.O. Major General Oliver Otis Howard, the commissioner of the Freedman's Bureau for the nation, headquartered in Washington D.C. He held the office for its five years of operation. Howard was one of the founders of Howard University in Washington, D.C., and it was named after him in recognition of his work in the bureau and for the university. From 1869-1874, he was the university's third president (1869-74).
- Johns, James. Also referred to as Jimmy. The drunken Camilla resident who fired the first shots into the bandwagon that started the Camilla Riot.
- Joiner, Philip. Also known as Phillip Joiner. Born in Virginia, he had lived as a slave in Dougherty County for more than a decade before becoming a freedman. He was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives in 1868 but was one of the 32 blacks expelled from the legislature in early September. In 1869 during Georgia's third Reconstruction, under military rule, Joiner returned to Atlanta with the rest of the reinstated black legislators to represent Dougherty County, particularly its black majority. Philip Joiner was the only representative to serve more than one term in the House.
- Kendrick, Goliath. A 24-year-old Mitchell County worker on the Orr plantation, fled Camilla with five friends as whites chased them. Kendrick broke away from his friends and made it back to the Orr place by sunset. Three of his friends never made it home.
- Lewis, J.R. Colonel John Randolph Lewis. Assigned by O.O. Howard to the position of assistant inspector general for the Georgia Freedman's Bureau. He served in that role (including the period of the Camilla incident) until he took over the position of assistant commissioner from Caleb Sibley on October 16, 1868. He was Georgia's last Bureau assistant commissioner.
- Lonon, Ishmael. A freedman, Lonon witnessed Joiner and Murphy's narrow escape from members of Sheriff Poore's posse. Ishmael Lonon was elected to the Georgia State legislature in 1880.
- Meade, G.G. General George Gordon Meade. Civil war hero who came to work for the Bureau, by January 1868 he had assumed military command of the Third Military District in Georgia.

- Mills, Captain William. Bureau agent who filed a report on the Camilla riot to General Meade.
- Murphy, John. Republican party candidate for elector. Organized the rally in Camilla along with W.P. Pierce and Francis Flagg (F.F.) Putney.
- Pierce, W.P. A Republican party congressional candidate from the second district that included Camilla. Pierce was formerly a Union Officer from Kentucky. He came to Lee County after the war and from late 1867 to September of the next year worked as an agent in the Freedmen's Bureau.
- Poore, Mumford S. Sheriff of Mitchell County.
- Putney, F.F. Francis Flagg Putney. Putney, a Union veteran, had moved to neighboring Dougherty County in 1865 and was a successful planter. He accompanied the freedmen to Camilla for the rally.
- Raushenberg, Christian. Dr. Christian Raushenberg. Served with the Bureau for around two and a half years, doubling as a bureau surgeon and agent in southwest Georgia. For a time he was stationed in Cuthbert in Randolph County, which may or may not have been his home at the time of the incident.
- Schofield, John McAllister. Union General during the Civil War; U.S. Secretary of War during the Camilla riot.
- Schlotfeldt, George. Assistant to O.H. Howard. He went to Governor Bullock and Caleb Sibley with details of the Camilla incident.
- Sibley, C.C. Colonel Caleb C. Sibley, an assistant commissioner for the state of Georgia for the federal agency, the Freedmen's Bureau, or what is more formally known as the Bureau of Refugees Freedmen and Abandoned Lands. He was Davis Tillson's successor. Tillson retired Jan 14, 1867 and Sibley served from that point until shortly after the incident at Camilla, October 16, 1868, when Commissioner O.O.Howard put John Randolph Lewis in charge of the state agency, and Sibley assumed exclusively the duties of military commander of the district of Georgia.
- "True Copy". The correspondence of bureau officials was handled in accordance with typical 19th-century recordkeeping practices. Outgoing letters and telegrams were recorded in letter books. These volumes of letters sent are either fair or press copies. The fair copies are handwritten duplicates of the originals. They are clear and easy to read. The press copies were obtained by wetting a piece of thin paper and pressing it on the original letter through the use of a press-copying machine that caused the image to be transferred to the moistened paper. Because of the relative crudeness of the press copy method, many of these are difficult to read and some are virtually illegible. Enclosures to letters generally were not copied into the volumes.

- Vason, Judge David A. Traveled from Albany to Camilla with three other white men to secure a statement from Sheriff Poore and eight other "men of good character" which laid the blame for the previous day's "disturbance" on armed blacks, "led by the wicked white men, Murphy, Pierce and Putney."
- Washington, James. One of the last freedmen to leave the scene at the courthouse, he ran and hid in the creek. Two others hiding with him decided to make a break for it, but he stayed put. Four whites shot those men down. Washington remained most of the night in his hiding place.

Appendix C:

Riots

<u>Number</u>	<u>Riot</u>	<u>Date</u>
	<u>Body Count</u>	
1.	Norfolk, Virginia	16 April 1866
	Dead: Two whites dead and three blacks; Wounded: not reported	
2.	New Orleans, Louisiana	30 July 1866
	Dead: five whites and thirty-four blacks; Wounded: thirty-one whites and one hundred and fifty-three blacks wounded	
3.	Mobile, Alabama	14 May 1867
	Dead: one white and one black; Wounded: seven whites and one black	
4.	Camilla, Georgia	19 Sept. 1868
	Dead: one white and fifteen blacks; Wounded: three whites and forty blacks	
5.	Opelousas, Louisiana	27-28 Sept. 1868
	Dead: two whites and one hundred blacks; Wounded: four whites and one hundred blacks	
6.	New Orleans, Louisiana	24-31 Sept. 1868
	Dead: seven whites and fourteen blacks; Wounded: four whites and one hundred blacks	
7.	Savannah, Georgia	3 Nov. 1868
	Dead: three whites and three blacks; Wounded: six whites and seventeen blacks	
8.	Mobile, Alabama	5 August 1869
	Dead: one white and three blacks; Wounded: eight whites and seven blacks	
10.	Macon, Georgia	2 Oct. 1872
	Dead: one white and four blacks; Wounded: four whites and three blacks	

11. Colfax, Louisiana 13 April 1873
Dead: three whites and between sixty and one hundred and fifty blacks;
Wounded: not reported
12. Eufaula, Alabama 3 Nov. 1874
Dead: between seven and eight blacks; Wounded: twelve whites and between
sixty and seventy blacks
13. Mobile, Alabama 3 Nov. 1874
Dead: three blacks; Wounded: not reported
14. Coushatta, Louisiana 14 Sept. 1874
Dead: six whites and five blacks; Wounded: not reported
15. Vicksburg, Mississippi 7 Dec. 1874
Dead: thirty-three blacks; Wounded: not reported
16. Yazoo City, Mississippi 1 Sept. 1875
Dead: two whites (blacks not reported); Wounded: not reported
17. Clinton, Mississippi 4 Sept. 1875
Dead: four whites and twenty-six blacks; Wounded: six whites and between fifty
and sixty blacks
18. Columbus, Mississippi 1 Nov. 1875
Dead: six blacks; Wounded: seven blacks
19. Charleston, South Carolina 6 Sept. 1876
Dead: one white and one black; Wounded: fifty whites and seven blacks
20. Ellenton, South Carolina 15-20 Sept. 1876
Dead: two whites and twenty-one blacks; Wounded: not reported

21.

Cainhoy, South Carolina

16 Oct. 1876

Dead: five whites and one black; Wounded: between fifteen and fifty whites and three blacks

Total reported casualties for Reconstruction race riots

Dead: forty-six whites and between four hundred and forty-five and four hundred and thirty six blacks; Wounded: between one hundred and forty-seven and one hundred eighty-two whites and between four hundred and sixty-one and four hundred and eighty-four blacks